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THE WORKS OF

GEORGE MEREDITH

POEMS

III

THE WORKS OF

GEORGE MEREDITH

VOLUME XXXI

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POEMS

VOLUME

III

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THE EMPTY PURSE
ETC.

WIND ON THE LYRE

WIND ON THE LYRE

That was the chirp of Ariel
You heard, as overhead it flew,
The farther going more to dwell,
And wing our green to wed our blue;
But whether note of joy or knell,
Not his own Father-singer knew;
Nor yet can any mortal tell,
Save only how it shivers through;
The breast of us a sounded shell,
The blood of us a lighted dew.

THE YOUTHFUL QUEST

His Lady queen of woods to meet,
He wanders day and night:
The leaves have whisperings discreet,
The mossy ways invite.

Across a lustrous ring of space,
By covert hoods and caves,
Is promise of her secret face
In film that onward waves.

For darkness is the light astrain,
Astrain for light the dark.
A grey moth down a larches' lane
Unwinds a ghostly spark.

Her lamp he sees, and young desire
Is fed while cloaked she flies.
She quivers shot of violet fire
To ash at look of eyes.

THE EMPTY PURSE

THE EMPTY PURSE

A SERMON TO OUR LATER PRODIGAL SON

Thou, run to the dry on this wayside bank,
Too plainly of all the propellers bereft!
    Quenched youth, and is that thy purse?
Even such limp slough as the snake has left
Slack to the gale upon spikes of whin,
For cast-off coat of a life gone blank
In its frame of a grin at the seeker, is thine;
    And thine to crave and to curse
    The sweet thing once within.
Accuse him: some devil committed the theft,
    Which leaves of the portly a skin,
    No more; of the weighty a whine.

Pursue him: and first, to be sure of his track,
Over devious ways that have led to this,
    In the stream's consecutive line,
    Let memory lead thee back
To where waves Morning her fleur-de-lys,

THE EMPTY PURSE

Unflushed at the front of the roseate door
Unopened yet: never shadow there
    Of a Tartarus lighted by Dis
    For souls whose cry is, alack!
An ivory cradle rocks, apeep
Through his eyelashes' laugh, a breathing pearl.

There the young chief of the animals wore
A likeness to heavenly hosts, unaware
Of his love of himself; with the hours at leap.
In a dingle away from a rutted highroad,
Around him the earliest throstle and merle,
Our human smile between milk and sleep,
    Effervescent of Nature he crowed.
Fair was that season; furl over furl
The banners of blossom; a dancing floor
This earth; very angels the clouds; and fair
Thou on the tablets of forehead and breast:
Careless, a centre of vigilant care.
Thy mother kisses an infant curl.
The room of the toys was a boundless nest,
    A kingdom the field of the games,
    Till entered the craving for more,
    And the worshipped small body had aims.

THE EMPTY PURSE

A good little idol, as records attest,
When they tell of him lightly appeased in a scream
By sweets and caresses: he gave but sign,
That the heir of a purse-plumped dominant race,
Accustomed to plenty, not dumb would pine.
Almost magician, his earliest dream
    Was lord of the unpossessed
    For a look; himself and his chase,
    As on puffs of a wind at whirl,
    Made one in the wink of a gleam.
    She kisses a locket curl,
She conjures to vision a cherub face,
    When her butterfly counted his day
    All meadow and flowers, mishap
    Derided, and taken for play
    The fling of an urchin's cap.

When her butterfly showed him an eaglet born,
    For preying too heedlessly bred,
    What a heart clapped in thee then!
    With what fuller colours of morn!
And high to the uttermost heavens it flew,
    Swift as on poet's pen.
    It flew to be wedded, to wed

THE EMPTY PURSE

The mystery scented around:
Issue of flower and dew,
Issue of light and sound:
Thinner than either; a thread
Spun of the dream they threw
To kindle, allure, evade.
It ran the sea-wave, the garden's dance,
To the forest's dark heart down a dappled glade;
Led on by a perishing glance,
By a twinkle's eternal waylaid.
Woman, the name was, when she took form;
Sheaf of the wonders of life. She fled,
Close imaged; she neared, far seen. How she made
Palpitate earth of the living and dead!
Did she not show thee the world designed
Solely for loveliness? Nested warm,
The day was the morrow in flight. And for thee,
She muted the discords, tuned, refined;
Drowned sharp edges beneath her cloak.
Eye of the waters, and throb of the tree,
Sliding on radiance, winging from shade,
With her witch-whisper o'er ruins, in reeds,
She sang low the song of her promise delayed;
Beckoned and died, as a finger of smoke

Astream over woodland. And was not she
History's heroines white on storm?
Remember her summons to valorous deeds.
Shone she a lure of the honey-bag swarm,
Most was her beam on the knightly: she led
For the honours of manhood more than the prize;
    Waved her magnetical yoke
    Whither the warrior bled,
    Ere to the bower of sighs.
And shy of her secrets she was; under deeps
Plunged at the breath of a thirst that woke
The dream in the cave where the Dreaded sleeps.

Away over heaven the young heart flew,
And caught many lustres, till some one said
(Or was it the thought into hearing grew?),
    Not thou as commoner men!
    Thy stature puffed and it swayed,
    It stiffened to royal-erect;
    A brassy trumpet brayed;
    A whirling seized thy head;
    The vision of beauty was flecked.
    Note well the how and the when,
    The thing that prompted and sped.

Thereanon the keen passions clapped wing,
Fixed eye, and the world was prey.
No simple world of thy greenblade Spring,
Nor world of thy flowerful prime
On the topmost Orient peak
Above a yet vaporous day.
Flesh was it, breast to beak:
A four-walled windowless world without ray,
Only darkening jets on a river of slime,
Where harsh over music as woodland jay,
A voice chants, Woe to the weak!
And along an insatiate feast,
Women and men are one
In the cup transforming to beast.

Magian worship they paid to their sun,
Lord of the Purse! Behold him climb.
Stalked ever such figure of fun
For monarch in great-grin pantomime?
See now the heart dwindle, the frame distend;
The soul to its anchorite cavern retreat,
From a life that reeks of the rotted end;
While he—is he pictureable? replete,
Gourd-like swells of the rank of the soil,

THE EMPTY PURSE

Hollow, more hollow at core.
And for him did the hundreds toil
Despised; in the cold and heat,
This image ridiculous bore
On their shoulders for morsels of meat!

Gross, with the fumes of incense full,
With parasites tickled, with slaves begirt,
He strutted, a cock, he bellowed, a bull,
    He rolled him, a dog, in dirt.
And dog, bull, cock, was he, fanged, horned, plumed;
Original man, as philosophers vouch;
Carnivorous, cannibal; length-long exhumed,
Frightfully living and armed to devour;
The primitive weapons of prey in his pouch;
    The bait, the line and the hook:
    To feed on his fellows intent.
    God of the Danaé shower,
    He had but to follow his bent.
He battened on fowl not safely hutched,
    On sheep astray from the crook;
    A lure for the foolish in fold:
To carrion turning what flesh he touched.

THE EMPTY PURSE

And O the grace of his air,
As he at the goblet sips,
A centre of girdles loosed,
With their grisly label, Sold!
Credulous hears the fidelity swear,
Which has roving eyes over yielded lips:
To-morrow will fancy himself the seduced,
The stuck in a treacherous slough,
Because of his faith in a purchased pair,
False to a vinous vow.

In his glory of banquet strip him bare,
And what is the creature we view?
Our pursy Apollo Apollyon's tool;
A small one, still of the crew
By serpent Apollyon blest:
His plea in apology, blindfold Fool.
A fool surcharged, propelled, unwarned;
Not viler, you hear him protest:
Of a popular countenance not incorrect.
But deeds are the picture in essence, deeds
Paint him the hooved and horned,
Despite the poor pother he pleads,
And his look of a nation's elect.

THE EMPTY PURSE

We have him, our quarry confessed!
And scan him: the features inspect
Of that bestial multiform: cry,
Corroborate I, O Samian Sage!
The book of thy wisdom, proved
On me, its last hieroglyph page,
Alive in the horned and hooved?
Thou! will he make reply.

Thus has the plenary purse
Done often: to do will engage
Anew upon all of thy like, or worse.

And now is thy deepest regret
To be man, clean rescued from beast:
From the grip of the Sorcerer, Gold,
Celestially released.

But now from his cavernous hold,
Free may thy soul be set,
As a child of the Death and the Life, to learn,
Refreshed by some bodily sweat,
The meaning of either in turn,
What issue may come of the two:—

THE EMPTY PURSE

A morn beyond mornings, beyond all reach
Of emotional arms at the stretch to enfold:
A firmament passing our visible blue.
To those having nought to reflect it, 'tis nought;
To those who are misty, 'tis mist on the beach
From the billow withdrawing; to those who see
    Earth, our mother, in thought,
    Her spirit it is, our key.

Ay, the Life and the Death are her words to us here,
Of one significance, pricking the blind.
This is thy gain now the surface is clear:
To read with a soul in the mirror of mind,
Is man's chief lesson.—Thou smilest! I preach!
    Acid smiling, my friend, reveals
Abysses within; frigid preaching a street
    Paved unconcernedly smooth
    For the lecturer straight on his heels,
    Up and down a policeman's beat;
    Bearing tonics not labelled to soothe.
Thou hast a disgust of the sermon in rhyme.
It is not attractive in being too chaste.
The popular tale of adventure and crime
Would equally sicken an overdone taste.

THE EMPTY PURSE

So, then, onward. Philosophy, thoughtless to soothe,
Lifts, if thou wilt, or there leaves thee supine.

Thy condition, good sooth, has no seeming of sweet;
It walks our first crags, it is flint for the tooth,
    For the thirsts of our nature brine.
But manful has met it, manful will meet.
And think of thy privilege: supple with youth,
    To have sight of the headlong swine,
    Once fouling thee, jumping the dips!
    As the coin of thy purse poured out:
    An animal's holiday past:
And free of them thou, to begin a new bout;
To start a fresh hunt on a resolute blast:
No more an imp-ridden to bournes of eclipse:
Having knowledge to spur thee, a gift to compare;
Rubbing shoulder to shoulder, as only the book
Of the world can be read, by necessity urged.
For witness, what blinkers are they who look
From the state of the prince or the millionnaire!
    They see but the fish they attract,
    The hungers on them converged;
And never the thought in the shell of the act,
    Nor ever life's fangless mirth.

But first, that the poisonous of thee be purged,
    Go into thyself, strike Earth.
She is there, she is felt in a blow struck hard.
Thou findest a pugilist countering quick,
Cunning at drives where thy shutters are barred;
Not, after the studied professional trick,
Blue-sealing; she brightens the sight. Strike Earth,
Antaeus, young giant, whom fortune trips!
    And thou com'st on a saving fact,
    To nourish thy planted worth.
Be it clay, flint, mud, or the rubble of chips,
Thy roots have grasp in the stern-exact:
The redemption of sinners deluded! the last
    Dry handful, that bruises and saves.
To the common big heart are we bound right fast,
    When our Mother admonishing nips
    At the nakedness bare of a clout,
    And we crave what the commonest craves.

This wealth was a fortress-wall,
Under which grew our grim little beast-god stout;
Self-worshipped, the foe, in division from all;
With crowds of illogical Christians, no doubt;
    Till the rescuing earthquake cracked.

Thus are we man made firm;
Made warm by the numbers compact.
We follow no longer a trumpet-snout,
At a trot where the hog is tracked,
Nor wriggle the way of the worm.

Thou wilt spare us the cynical pout
At humanity: sign of a nature bechurled.
No stenchy anathemas cast
Upon Providence, women, the world.
Distinguish thy tempers and trim thy wits.
The purchased are things of the mart, not classed
Among resonant types that have freely grown.

Thy knowledge of women might be surpassed:
As any sad dog's of sweet flesh when he quits
The wayside wandering bone!
No revilings of comrades as ingrates: thee
The tempter, misleader, and criminal (screened
By laws yet barbarous) own.
If some one performed Fiend's deputy,
He was for awhile the Fiend.

Still, nursing a passion to speak,
As the punch-bowl does, in the moral vein,
When the ladle has finished its leak,
And the vessel is loquent of nature's inane,
Hie where the demagogues roar
Like a Phalaris bull, with the victim's force:
Hurrah to their jolly attack
On a City that smokes of the Plain;
A city of sin's death-dyes,
Holding revel of worms in a corse;
A city of malady sore,
Over-ripe for the big doom's crack:
A city of hymnical snore;
Connubial truths and lies
Demanding an instant divorce,
Clean as the bright from the black.
It were well for thy system to sermonize.
There are giants to slay, and they call for their Jack.

Then up stand thou in the midst:
Thy good grain out of thee thresh,
Hand upon heart: relate
What things thou legally didst
For the Archseducer of flesh.

THE EMPTY PURSE

Omitting the murmurs at women and fate,
    Confess thee an instrument armed
    To be snare of our wanton, our weak,
    Of all by the sensual charmed.
For once shall repentance be done by the tongue:
    Speak, though execrate, speak
    A word on grandmotherly Laws
    Giving rivers of gold to our young,
    In the days of their hungers impure;
    To furnish them beak and claws,
    And make them a banquet's lure.

    Thou the example, saved
Miraculously by this poor skin!
    Thereat let the Purse be waved:
The snake-slough sick of the snaky sin:
A devil, if devil as devil behaved
Ever, thou knowest, look thou but in,
Where he shivers, a culprit fettered and shaved;
O a bird stripped of feather, a fish clipped of fin!

And commend for a washing the torrents of wrath,
Which hurl at the foe of the dearest men prize,
    Rough-rolling boulders and froth.

Gigantical enginery they can command,
For the crushing of enemies not of great size:
But hold to thy desperate stand.
Men's right of bequeathing their all to their own
(With little regard for the creatures they squeezed);
Their mill and mill-water and nether mill-stone
Tied fast to their infant; lo, this is the last
Of their hungers, by prudent devices appeased.
The law they decree is their ultimate slave;
Wherein we perceive old Voracity glassed.
It works from their dust, and it reeks of their grave.
Point them to greener, though Journals be guns;
To brotherly fields under fatherly skies;
Where the savage still primitive learns of a debt
He has owed since he drummed on his belly for war;
And how for his giving, the more will he get;
For trusting his fellows, leave friends round his sons:
Till they see, with the gape of a startled surprise,
Their adored tyrant-monster a brute to abhor,
The sun of their system a father of flies!

So, for such good hope, take their scourge unashamed;
'Tis the portion of them who civilize,

THE EMPTY PURSE

Who speak the word novel and true:
How the brutish antique of our springs may be tamed,
Without loss of the strength that should push us to
flower;
How the God of old time will act Satan of new,
If we keep him not straight at the higher God aimed;
For whose habitation within us we scour
This house of our life; where our bitterest pains
Are those to eject the Infernal, who heaps
Mire on the soul. Take stripes or chains;
Grip at thy standard reviled.
And what if our body be dashed from the steeps?
Our spoken in protest remains.
A young generation reaps.

The young generation! ah, there is the child
Of our souls down the Ages! to bleed for it, proof
That souls we have, with our senses filed,
Our shuttles at thread of the woof.
May it be braver than ours,
To encounter the rattle of hostile bolts,
To look on the rising of Stranger Powers.
May it know how the mind in expansion revolts

THE EMPTY PURSE

From a nursery Past with dead letters aloof,
And the piping to stupor of Precedents shun,
In a field where the forefather print of the hoof
Is not yet overgrassed by the watering hours,
And should prompt us to Change, as to promise of
sun,
Till brain-rule splendidly towers.

For that large light we have laboured and tramped
Thorough forests and bogland, still to perceive
Our animate morning stamped
With the lines of a sombre eve.

A timorous thing ran the innocent hind,
When the wolf was the hypocrite fang under hood,
The snake a lithe lurker up sleeve,
And the lion effulgently ramped.
Then our forefather hoof did its work in the wood,
By right of the better in kind.
But now will it breed yon bestial brood
Three-fold thrice over, if bent to bind,
As the healthy in chains with the sick,
Unto despot usage our issuing mind.
It signifies battle or death's dull knell.

THE EMPTY PURSE

Precedents icily written on high,
Challenge the Tentatives hot to rebel.
Our Mother, who speeds her bloomful quick
For the march, reads which the impediment well.
She smiles when of sapience is their boast.
O loose of the tug between blood run dry
And blood running flame may our offspring run!
May brain democratic be king of the host!
Less then shall the volumes of History tell
Of the step in progression, the slip in relapse,
That counts us a sand-slack inch hard won
Beneath an oppressive incumbent perhaps.

Let the senile lords in a parchment sky,
And the generous turbulents drunken of morn,
    Their battle of instincts put by,
    A moment examine this field:
On a Roman street cast thoughtful eye,
Along to the mounts from the bog-forest weald.
It merits a glance at our history's maps,
To see across Britain's old shaggy unshorn,
Through the Parties in strife internecine, foot
The ruler's close-reckoned direct to the mark.
From the head ran the vanquisher's orderly route,

In the stride of his forts through the tangle and dark.
From the head runs the paved firm way for advance,
And we shoulder, we wrangle! The light on us shed,
Shows dense beetle blackness in swarm, lurid Chance,
The Goddess of gamblers, above. From the head,
Then when it worked for the birth of a star
Fraternal with heaven's in beauty and ray,
Sprang the Acropolis. Ask what crown
Comes of our tides of the blood at war,
For men to bequeath generations down!
And ask what thou wast when the Purse was brimmed:
What high-bounding ball for the Gods at play:
A Conservative youth! who the cream-bowl skimmed,
Desiring affairs to be left as they are.

So, thou takest Youth's natural place in the fray,
As a Tentative, combating Peace,
Our lullaby word for decay.—
There will come an immediate decree
In thy mind for the opposite party's decease,
If he bends not an instant knee.
Expunge it: extinguishing counts poor gain.
And accept a mild word of police:—
Be mannerly, measured; refrain

From the puffings of him of the bagpipe cheeks.
Our political, even as the merchant main,
    A temperate gale requires
    For the ship that haven seeks;
Neither God of the winds nor his bellowsy squires.

    Then observe the antagonist, con
His reasons for rocking the lullaby word.
You stand on a different stage of the stairs.
He fought certain battles, yon senile lord.
In the strength of thee, feel his bequest to his heirs.
We are now on his inches of ground hard won,
For a perch to a flight o'er his resting fence.

Does it knock too hard at thy head if I say,
    That Time is both father and son?
Tough lesson, when senses are floods over sense!—
    Discern the paternal of Now
    As the Then of thy present tense.
    You may pull as you will either way,
    You can never be other than one.
    So, be filial. Giants to slay,
    Demand knowing eyes in their Jack.

THE EMPTY PURSE

There are those whom we push from the path with
respect.
Bow to that elder, though seeing him bow
To the backward as well, for a thunderous back
Upon thee. In his day he was not all wrong.
Unto some foundered zenith he strove, and was
wrecked.
He scrambled to shore with a worship of shore.
The Future he sees as the slippery murk;
The Past as his doctrinal library lore.
He stands now the rock to the wave's wild wash.
Yet thy lumpish antagonist once did work
Heroical, one of our strong.
His gold to retain and his dross reject,
Engage him, but humour, not aiming to quash.
Detest the dead squat of the Turk,
And suffice it to move him along.

Drink of faith in the brains a full draught
Before the oration: beware
Lest rhetoric moonily waft
Whither horrid activities snare.
Rhetoric, juice for the mob
Despising more luminous grape,

THE EMPTY PURSE

Oft at its fount has it laughed
In the cataracts rolling for rape
Of a Reason left single to sob!

'Tis known how the permanent never is writ
In blood of the passions: mercurial they,
Shifty their issue: stir not that pit
To the game our brutes best play.

But with rhetoric loose, can we check man's brute?
Assemblies of men on their legs invoke
Excitement for wholesome diversion: there shoot
Electrical sparks between their dry thatch
And thy waved torch, more to kindle than light.
'Tis instant between you: the trick of a catch
(To match a Batrachian croak)
Will thump them a frenzy or fun in their veins.
Then may it be rather the well-worn joke
Thou repeatest, to stop conflagration, and write
Penance for rhetoric. Strange will it seem,
When thou readest that form of thy homage to brains!

For the secret why demagogues fail,
Though they carry hot mobs to the red extreme,

And knock out or knock in the nail
(We will rank them as flatly sincere,
Devoutly detesting a wrong,
Engines o'ercharged with our human steam),
Question thee, seething amid the throng.
And ask, whether Wisdom is born of blood-
heat;
Or of other than Wisdom comes victory here;—
Aught more than the banquet and roundelay,
That is closed with a terrible terminal wail,
A retributive black ding-dong?
And ask of thyself: This furious Yea
Of a speech I thump to repeat,
In the cause I would have prevail,
For seed of a nourishing wheat,
Is it accepted of Song?
Does it sound to the mind through the ear,
Right sober, pure sane? has it disciplined feet?
Thou wilt find it a test severe;
Unerring whatever the theme.
Rings it for Reason a melody clear,
We have bidden old Chaos retreat;
We have called on Creation to hear;
All forces that make us are one full stream.

Simple islander! thus may the spirit in verse,
Showing its practical value and weight,
Pipe to thee clear from the Empty Purse,
Lead thee aloft to that high estate.—
The test is conclusive, I deem:
It embraces or mortally bites.
We have then the key-note for debate:
A Senate that sits on the heights
Over discords, to shape and amend.

And no singer is needed to serve
The musical God, my friend.
Needs only his law on a sensible nerve:
A law that to Measure invites,
Forbidding the passions contend.

Is it accepted of Song?
And if then the blunt answer be Nay,
Dislink thee sharp from the ramping horde,
Slaves of the Goddess of hoar-old sway,
The Queen of delirous rites,
Queen of those issueless mobs, that rend
For frenzy the strings of a fruitful accord,
Pursuing insensate, seething in throng,

Their wild idea to its ashen end.
Off to their Phrygia, shriek and gong,
Shorn from their fellows, behold them wend!

But thou, should the answer ring Ay,
Hast warrant of seed for thy word:
The musical God is nigh
To inspirit and temper, tune it, and steer
Through the shoals: is it worthy of Song,
There are souls all woman to hear,
Woman to bear and renew.
For he is the Master of Measure, and weighs,
Broad as the arms of his blue,
Fine as the web of his rays,
Justice, whose voice is a melody clear,
The one sure life for the numbered long.
From him are the brutal and vain,
The vile, the excessive, out-thrust:
He points to the God on the upmost throne:
He is the saver of grain,
The sifter of spirit from dust.
He, Harmony, tells how to Measure pertain
The virilities: Measure alone
Has votaries rich in the male:

Fathers embracing no cloud,
Sowing no harvestless main:
Alike by the flesh and the spirit endowed
To create, to perpetuate; woo, win, wed;
Send progeny streaming, have earth for their own,
Over-run the insensates, disperse with a puff
Simulacra, though solid they sail,
And seem such imperial stuff:
Yes, the living divide off the dead.

Then thou with thy furies outgrown,
Not as Cybele's beast will thy head lash tail
So præter-determinedly thermonous,
Nor thy cause be an Attis far fled.
Thou under stress of the strife,
Shalt hear for sustainment supreme,
The cry of the conscience of Life:
Keep the young generations in hail,
And bequeath them no tumbled house!

There hast thou the sacred theme,
Therein the inveterate spur,
Of the Innermost. See her one blink
In vision past eyeballs. Not thee

She cares for, but us. Follow her.
Follow her, and thou wilt not sink.
With thy soul the Life espouse:
This Life of the visible, audible, ring
With thy love tight about; and no death will be;
The name be an empty thing,
And woe a forgotten old trick:
And battle will come as a challenge to drink;
As a warrior's wound each transient sting.
She leads to the Uppermost link by link;
Exacts but vision, desires not vows.
Above us the singular number to see;
The plural warm round us; ourself in the thick,
A dot or a stop: that is our task;
Her lesson in figured arithmetic,
For the letters of Life behind its mask;
Her flower-like look under fearful brows.

As for thy special case, O my friend, one must think
Massilia's victim, who held the carouse
For the length of a carnival year,
Knew worse: but the wretch had his opening choice.
For thee, by our law, no alternatives were:
Thy fall was assured ere thou camest to a voice.

He cancelled the ravaging Plague,
With the roll of his fat off the cliff.
Do thou with thy lean as the weapon of ink,
Though they call thee an angler who fishes the vague
And catches the not too pink,
Attack one as murderous, knowing thy cause
Is the cause of community. Iterate,
Iterate, iterate, harp on the trite:
Our preacher to win is the supple in stiff:
Yet always in measure, with bearing polite:
The manner of one that would expiate
His share in grandmotherly Laws,
Which do the dark thing to destroy,
Under aspect of water so guilelessly white
For the general use, by the devils befouied.

Enough, poor prodigal boy!
Thou hast listened with patience; another had howled.
Repentance is proved, forgiveness is earned.
And 'tis bony: denied thee thy succulent half
Of the parable's blessing to swineherd returned:
A Sermon thy slice of the Scriptural calf!

THE EMPTY PURSE

By my faith, there is feasting to come,
Not the less, when our Earth we have seen
Beneath and on surface, her deeds and designs:
Who gives us the man-loving Nazarene,
The martyrs, the poets, the corn and the vines.
By my faith in the head, she has wonders in loom;
Revelations, delights. I can hear a faint crow
Of the cock of fresh mornings, far, far, yet distinct;
As down the new shafting of mines,
A cry of the metally gnome.
When our Earth we have seen, and have linked
With the home of the Spirit to whom we unfold,
Imprisoned humanity open will throw
Its fortress gates, and the rivers of gold
For the congregate friendliness flow.
Then the meaning of Earth in her children behold:
Glad eyes, frank hands, and a fellowship real:
And laughter on lips, as the birds' outburst
At the flooding of light. No robbery then
The feast, nor a robber's abode the home,
For a furnished model of our first den!
Nor Life as a stationed wheel;
Nor History written in blood or in foam,
For vendetta of Parties in cursing accursed.

THE EMPTY PURSE

The God in the conscience of multitudes feel,
    And we feel deep to Earth at her heart,
    We have her communion with men,
    New ground, new skies for appeal.
Yield into harness thy best and thy worst;
Away on the trot of thy servitude start,
Through the rigours and joys and sustainments of air.
If courage should falter, 'tis wholesome to kneel.
Remember that well, for the secret with some,
Who pray for no gift, but have cleansing in prayer,
And free from impurities tower-like stand.
I promise not more, save that feasting will come
To a mind and a body no longer inversed:
The sense of large charity over the land,
Earth's wheaten of wisdom dispensed in the rough,
And a bell ringing thanks for a sustenance meal
    Through the active machine: lean fare,
But it carries a sparkle! And now enough,
    And part we as comrades part,
To meet again never or some day or soon.

Our season of drought is reminder rude:—
    No later than yesternoon,
    I looked on the horse of a cart,

THE EMPTY PURSE

By the wayside water-trough.
How at every draught of his bride of thirst
His nostrils widened! The sight was good:
Food for us, food, such as first
Drew our thoughts to earth's lowly for food.

JUMP-TO-GLORY JANE

JUMP-TO-GLORY JANE

I

A revelation came on Jane,
The widow of a labouring swain:
And first her body trembled sharp,
Then all the woman was a harp
With winds along the strings; she heard,
Though there was neither tone nor word.

II

For past our hearing was the air,
Beyond our speaking what it bare,
And she within herself had sight
Of heaven at work to cleanse outright,
To make of her a mansion fit
For angel hosts inside to sit.

III

They entered, and forthwith entranced,
Her body braced, her members danced;
Surprisingly the woman leapt;
And countenance composed she kept;
As gossip neighbours in the lane
Declared, who saw and pitied Jane.

IV

These knew she had been reading books,
The which was witnessed by her looks
Of late: she had a mania
For mad folk in America,
And said for sure they led the way,
But meat and beer were meant to stay.

V

That she had visited a fair,
Had seen a gauzy lady there,
Alive with tricks on legs alone,
As good as wings, was also known:
And longwhiles in a sullen mood,
Before her jumping, Jane would brood.

VI

A good knee's height, they say, she sprang;
Her arms and feet like those who hang:
As if afire the body sped,
And neither pair contributed.
She jumped in silence: she was thought
A corpse to resurrection caught.

VII

The villagers were mostly dazed;
They jeered, they wondered, and they praised.
'Twas guessed by some she was inspired,
And some would have it she had hired
An engine in her petticoats,
To turn their wits and win their votes.

VIII

Her first was Winny Earnes, a kind
Of woman not to dance inclined;
But she went up, entirely won,
Ere Jump-to-glory Jane had done;
And once a vixen wild for speech,
She found the better way to preach.

IX

No long time after, Jane was seen
Directing jumps at Daddy Green;
And that old man, to watch her fly,
Had eyebrows made of arches high;
Till homeward he likewise did hop,
Oft calling on himself to stop!

X

It was a scene when man and maid,
Abandoning all other trade,
And careless of the call to meals,
Went jumping at the woman's heels.
By dozens they were counted soon,
Without a sound to tell their tune.

XI

Along the roads they came, and crossed
The fields, and o'er the hills were lost,
And in the evening reappeared;
Then short like hobbled horses reared,
And down upon the grass they plumped:
Alone their Jane to glory jumped.

XII

At morn they rose, to see her spring
All going as an engine thing;
And lighter than the gossamer
She led the bobbers following her,
Past old acquaintances, and where
They made the stranger stupid stare.

XIII

When turnips were a filling crop,
In scorn they jumped a butcher's shop:
Or, spite of threats to flog and souse,
They jumped for shame a public-house:
And much their legs were seized with rage
If passing by the vicarage.

XIV

The tightness of a hempen rope
Their bodies got; but laundry soap
Not handsomer can rub the skin
For token of the washed within.
Occasionally coughers cast
A leg aloft and coughed their last.

XV

The weaker maids and some old men,
Requiring rafters for the pen
On rainy nights, were those who fell.
The rest were quite a miracle,
Refreshed as you may search all round
On Club-feast days and cry, Not found!

XVI

For these poor innocents, that slept
Against the sky, soft women wept:
For never did they any theft;
'Twas known when they their camping left,
And jumped the cold out of their rags;
In spirit rich as money-bags.

XVII

They jumped the question, jumped reply;
And whether to insist, deny,
Reprove, persuade, they jumped in ranks
Or singly, straight the arms to flanks,
And straight the legs, with just a knee
For bending in a mild degree.

XVIII

The villagers might call them mad;
An endless holiday they had,
Of pleasure in a serious work:
They taught by leaps where perils lurk,
And with the lambkins practised sports
For 'scaping Satan's pounds and quarts.

XIX

It really seemed on certain days,
When they bobbed up their Lord to praise,
And bobbing up they caught the glance
Of light, our secret is to dance,
And hold the tongue from hindering peace;
To dance out preacher and police.

XX

Those flies of boys disturbed them sore
On Sundays and when daylight wore:
With withies cut from hedge or copse,
They treated them as whipping-tops,
And flung big stones with cruel aim;
Yet all the flock jumped on the same.

XXI

For what could persecution do
To worry such a blessed crew,
On whom it was as wind to fire,
Which set them always jumping higher?
The parson and the lawyer tried,
By meek persistency defied.

XXII

But if they bore, they could pursue
As well, and this the Bishop too;
When inner warnings proved him plain
The chase for Jump-to-glory Jane.
She knew it by his being sent
To bless the feasting in the tent.

XXIII

Not less than fifty years on end,
The Squire had been the Bishop's friend:
And his poor tenants, harmless ones,
With souls to save! fed not on buns,
But angry meats: she took her place
Outside to show the way to grace.

XXIV

In apron suit the Bishop stood;
The crowding people kindly viewed.
A gaunt grey woman he saw rise
On air, with most beseeching eyes:
And evident as light in dark
It was, she set to him for mark.

XXV

Her highest leap had come: with ease
She jumped to reach the Bishop's knees:
Compressing tight her arms and lips,
She sought to jump the Bishop's hips:
Her aim flew at his apron-band,
That he might see and understand.

XXVI

The mild inquiry of his gaze
Was altered to a peaked amaze,
At sight of thirty in ascent;
To gain his notice clearly bent:
And greatly Jane at heart was vexed
By his ploughed look of mind perplexed.

XXVII

In jumps that said, Beware the pit!
More eloquent than speaking it—
That said, Avoid the boiled, the roast;
The heated nose on face of ghost,
Which comes of drinking: up and o'er
The flesh with me! did Jane implore.

XXVIII

She jumped him high as huntsmen go
Across the gate; she jumped him low,
To coax him to begin and feel
His infant steps returning, peel
His mortal pride, exposing fruit,
And off with hat and apron suit.

XXIX

We need much patience, well she knew,
And out and out, and through and through,
When we would gentlefolk address,
However we may seek to bless:
At times they hide them like the beasts
From sacred beams; and mostly priests.

XXX

He gave no sign of making bare,
Nor she of faintness or despair.
Inflamed with hope that she might win,
If she but coaxed him to begin,
She used all arts for making fain;
The mother with her babe was Jane.

XXXI

Now stamped the Squire, and knowing not
Her business, waved her from the spot.
Encircled by the men of might,
The head of Jane, like flickering light,
As in a charger, they beheld
Ere she was from the park expelled.

XXXII

Her grief, in jumps of earthly weight,
Did Jane around communicate:
For that the moment when began
The holy but mistaken man,
In view of light, to take his lift,
They cut him from her charm adrift!

XXXIII

And he was lost: a banished face
For ever from the ways of grace,
Unless pinched hard by dreams in fright.
They saw the Bishop's wavering sprite
Within her look, at come and go,
Long after he had caused her woe.

XXXIV

Her greying eyes (until she sank
At Fredsham on the wayside bank,
Like cinder heaps that whitened lie
From coals that shot the flame to sky)
Had glassy vacancies, which yearned
For one in memory discerned.

XXXV

May those who ply the tongue that cheats,
And those who rush to beer and meats,
And those whose mean ambition aims
At palaces and titled names,
Depart in such a cheerful strain
As did our Jump-to-glory Jane!

XXXVI

Her end was beautiful: one sigh.
She jumped a foot when it was nigh.
A lily in a linen clout
She looked when they had laid her out.
It is a lily-light she bears
For England up the ladder-stairs.

ODES

ODES

TO THE COMIC SPIRIT

Sword of Common Sense!—
Our surest gift: the sacred chain
Of man to man: firm earth for trust
In structures vowed to permanence:—
Thou guardian issue of the harvest brain!
Implacable perforce of just;
With that good treasure in defence,
Which is our gold crushed out of joy and pain
Since first men planted foot and hand was king:
Bright, nimble of the marrow-nerve
To wield thy double edge, retort
Or hold the deadlier reserve,
And through thy victim's weapon sting:
Thine is the service, thine the sport
This shifty heart of ours to hunt
Across its webs and round the many a ring

Where fox it is, or snake, or mingled seeds
Occasion heats to shape, or the poor smoke
Struck from a puff-ball, or the troughster's grunt;—
Once lion of our desert's trodden weeds;
And but for thy straight finger at the yoke,
Again to be the lordly paw,
Naming his appetites his needs,
Behind a decorative cloak:
Thou, of the highest, the unwritten Law
We read upon that building's architrave
In the mind's firmament, by men upraised
With sweat of blood when they had quitted cave
For fellowship, and rearward looked amazed,
Where the prime motive gapes a lurid jaw,
Thou, soul of wakened heads, art armed to warn,
Restrain, lest we backslide on whence we sprang,
Scarce better than our dwarf beginning shoot,
Of every gathered pearl and blossom shorn;
Through thee, in novel wiles to win disguise,
Seen are the pits of the disruptor, seen
His rebel agitation at our root:
Thou hast him out of hawking eyes;
Nor ever morning of the clang
Young Echo sped on hill from horn

TO THE COMIC SPIRIT

In forest blown when scent was keen
Off earthy dews besprinkling blades
Of covert grass more merrily rang
The yelp of chase down alleys green,
Forth of the headlong-pouring glades,
Over the dappled fallows wild away,
Than thy fine unaccented scorn
At sight of man's old secret brute,
Devout for pasture on his prey,
Advancing, yawning to devour;
With step of deer, with voice of flute,
Haply with visage of the lily flower.

Let the cock crow and ruddy morn
His handmaiden appear! Youth claims his hour.
The generously ludicrous
Espouses it. But see we sons of day,
On whom Life leans for guidance in our fight,
Accept the throb for lord of us;
For lord, for the main central light
That gives direction, not the eclipse;
Or dost thou look where niggard Age,
Demanding reverence for wrinkles, whips
A tumbled top to grind a wolf's worn tooth;—

TO THE COMIC SPIRIT

Hoar despot on our final stage,
In dotage of a stunted Youth;—
Or it may be some venerable sage,
Not having thee awake in him, compact
Of wisdom else, the breast's old tempter trips;
Or see we ceremonial state,
Robing the gilded beast, exact
Abjection, while the crackskull name of Fate
Is used to stamp and hallow printed fact;
A cruel corner lengthens up thy lips;
These are thy game wherever men engage:
These and, majestic in a borrowed shape,
The major and the minor potentate,
Creative of their various ape;—
The tiptoe mortals triumphing to write
Upon a perishable page
An inch above their fellows' height;—
The criers of foregone wisdom, who impose
Its slough on live conditions, much for the greed
Of our first hungry figure wide agape;—
Call up thy hounds of laughter to their run.
These, that would have men still of men be foes,
Eternal fox to prowl and pike to feed;
Would keep our life the whirly pool

Of turbid stuff dishonouring History;
The herd the drover's herd, the fool the fool,
Ourself our slavish self's infernal sun:
These are the children of the heart untaught
By thy quick founts to beat abroad, by thee
Untamed to tone its passions under thought,
The rich humaneness reading in thy fun.
Of them a world of coltish heels for school,
We have; a world with driving wrecks bestrewn.

'Tis written of the Gods of human mould,
Those Nectar Gods, of glorious stature hewn
To quicken hymns, that they did hear incensed,
Satiric comments overbold,
From one whose part was by decree
The jester's; but they boiled to feel him bite.
Better for them had they with Reason fenced
Or smiled corrected! They in the great Gods' might,
Their prober crushed, as fingers flea.
Crumbled Olympus when the sovereign sire
His fatal kick to Momus gave, albeit
Men could behold the sacred Mount aspire,
The Satirist pass by on limping feet.
Those Gods who saw the ejected laugh alight

Below, had then their last of airy glee;
They in the cup sought Laughter's drownèd sprite,
Fed to dire fatness off uncurbed conceit.
Eyes under saw them waddle on their Mount,
And drew them down; to flattest earth they rolled.
This know we veritable. O Sage of Mirth!
Can it be true, the story men recount
Of the fall'n plight of the great Gods on earth?
How they being deathless, though of human mould,
With human cravings, undecaying frames,
Must labour for subsistence; are a band
Whom a loose-cheeked, wide-lipped gay cripple leads
At haunts of holiday on summer sand:
And lightly he will hint to one that heeds,
Names in pained designation of them, names
Ensphered on blue skies and on black, which twirl
Our hearing madly from our seeing dazed,
Add Bacchus unto both; and he entreats
(His baby dimples in maternal chaps
Running wild labyrinths of line and curl)
Compassion for his masterful Trombone,
Whose thunder is the brass of how he blazed
Of old: for him of the mountain-muscle feats,
Who guts a drum to fetch a snappish groan:

TO THE COMIC SPIRIT

For his fierce bugler horning onset, whom
A truncheon-battered helmet caps. . . .
The creature is of earnest mien
To plead a sorrow darker than the tomb.
His Harp and Triangle, in tone subdued,
He names; they are a rayless red and white;
The dawn-hued libertine, the gibbous prude.
And, if we recognize his Tambourine,
He asks; exhausted names her: she has become
A globe in cupolas; the blowziest queen
Of overflowing dome on dome;
Redundancy contending with the tight,
Leaping the dam! He fondly calls, his girl,
The buxom tripper with the goblet-smile,
Refreshful. O but now his brows are dun,
Bunched are his lips, as when distilling guile,
To drop his venomous: the Dame of dames,
Flower of the world, that honey one,
She of the earthly rose in the sea-pearl,
To whom the world ran ocean for her kiss;
He names her, as a worshipper he names,
And indicates with a contemptuous thumb.
The lady meanwhile lures the mob, alike
Ogles the bursters of the horn and drum.

TO THE COMIC SPIRIT

Curtain her close! her open arms
Have suckers for beholders: she to this?
For that she could not, save in fury, hear
A sharp corrective utterance flick
Her idle manners, for the laugh to strike
Beauty so breeding beauty, without peer
Above the snows, among the flowers? She reaps
This mouldy garner of the fatal kick?
Gross with the sacrifice of Circe-swarms,
Astarte of vile sweets that slay, malign,
From Greek resplendent to Phoenician foul,
The trader in attractions sinks, all brine
To thoughts of taste; is 't love?—bark, dog! hoot, owl!
And she is blushless: ancient worship weeps.
Suicide Graces dangle down the charms
Sprawling like gourds on outer garden-heaps.
She stands in her unholy oily leer
A statue losing feature, weather-sick
Mid draggled creepers of twined ivy sere.
The curtain cried for magnifies to see!—
We cannot quench our one corrupting glance:
The vision of the rumour will not flee.
Doth the Boy own such Mother?—shoot his dart
To bring her, countless as the crested deeps,

Her subjects of the uncorrected heart?
False is that vision, shrieks the devotee;
Incredible, we echo; and anew
Like a far growling lightning-cloud it leaps.
Low humourist this leader seems; perchance
Pitched from his University career,
Adept at classic fooling. Yet of mould
Human those Gods were: deathless too:
On high they not as meditatives paced:
Prodigiously they did the deeds of flesh:
Descending, they would touch the lowest here:
And she, that lighted form of blue and gold,
Whom the seas gave, all earth, all earth embraced;
Exulting in the great hauls of her mesh;
Desired and hated, desperately dear;
Most human of them was. No more pursue!
Enough that the black story can be told.
It preaches to the eminently placed:
For whom disastrous wreckage is nigh due,
Paints omen. Truly they our throbber had;
The passions plumping, passions playing leech,
Cunning to trick us for the day's good cheer.
Our uncorrected human heart will swell
To notions monstrous, doings mad

As billows on a foam-lashed beach;
Borne on the tides of alternating heats,
Will drug the brain, will doom the soul as well;
Call the closed mouth of that harsh final Power
To speak in judgement: Nemesis, the fell:
Of those bright Gods assembled, offspring sour;
The last surviving on the upper seats;
As with men Reason when their hearts rebel.

Ah, what a fruitless breeder is this heart,
Full of the mingled seeds, each eating each.
Not wiser of our mark than at the start,
It surges like the wrath-faced father Sea
To countering winds; a force blind-eyed,
On endless rounds of aimless reach;
Emotion for the source of pride,
The grounds of faith in fixity
Above our flesh; its cravings urging speech,
Inspiring prayer; by turns a lump
Swung on a time-piece, and by turns
A quivering energy to jump
For seats angelical: it shrinks, it yearns,
Loves, loathes; is flame or cinders; lastly cloud

Capping a sullen crater: and mankind
We see cloud-capped, an army of the dark,
Because of thy straight leadership declined;
At heels of this or that delusive spark:
Now when the multitudinous races press
Elbow to elbow hourly more,
A thickened host; when now we hear aloud
Life for the very life implore
A signal of a visioned mark;
Light of the mind, the mind's discourse,
The rational in graciousness,
Thee by acknowledgement enthroned,
To tame and lead that blind-eyed force
In harmony of harness with the crowd,
For payment of their dues; as yet disowned,
Save where some dutiful lone creature, vowed
To holy work, deems it the heart's intent;
Or where a silken circle views it cowled,
The seeming figure of concordance, bent
On satiating tyrant lust
Or barren fits of sentiment.

Thou wilt not have our paths befouled
By simulation; are we vile to view,

TO THE COMIC SPIRIT

The heavens shall see us clean of our own dust,
Beneath thy breezy flitting wing:
They make their mirror upon faces true;
And where they win reflection, lucid heave
The under tides of this hot heart seen through.
Beneficently wilt thou clip
All oversteppings of the plumed,
The puffed, and bid the masker strip,
And into the crowned windbag thrust,
Tearing the mortal from the vital thing,
A lightning o'er the half-illumed,
Who to base brute-dominion cleave,
Yet mark effects, and shun the flash,
Till their drowsed wits a beam conceive,
To spy a wound without a gash,
The magic in a turn of wrist,
And how are wedded heart and head regaled
When Wit o'er Folly blows the mort,
And their high note of union spreads
Wide from the timely word with conquest charged;
Victorious laughter, of no loud report,
If heard; derision as divinely veiled
As terrible Immortals in rose-mist,

TO THE COMIC SPIRIT

Given to the vision of arrested men:
Whereat they feel within them weave
Community its closer threads,
And are to our fraternal state enlarged;
Like warm fresh blood is their enlivened ken:
They learn that thou art not of alien sort,
Speaking the tongue by vipers hissed,
Or of the frosty heights unscaled,
Or of the vain who simple speech distort,
Or of the vapours pointing on to nought
Along cold skies; though sharp and high thy pitch:
As when sole homeward the belated treads,
And hears aloft a clamour wailed,
That once had seemed the broomstick witch
Horridly violating cloud for drought:
He from the rub of minds dispersing fears,
Hears migrants marshalling their midnight train;
Homeliest order in black sky appears,
Not less than in the lighted village steads.
So do those half-illumed wax clear to share
A cry that is our common voice; the note
Of fellowship upon a loftier plane,
Above embattled castle-wall and moat;
And toning drops as from pure heaven it sheds.

So thou for washing a phantasmal air,
For thy sweet singing keynote of the wise,
Laughter—the joy of Reason seeing fade
Obstruction into Earth's renewing beds,
Beneath the stroke of her good servant's blade—
Thenceforth art as their earth-star hailed;
Gain of the years, conjunction's prize.
The greater heart in thy appeal to heads,
They see, thou Captain of our civil Fort!
By more elusive savages assailed
On each ascending stage; untired
Both inner foe and outer to cut short,
And blow to chaff pretenders void of grist:
Showing old tiger's claws, old crocodile's
Yard-grin of eager grinders, slim to sight,
Like forms in running water, oft when smiles,
When pearly tears, when fluent lips delight:
But never with the slayer's malice fired:
As little as informs an infant's fist
Clenched at the sneeze! Thou wouldst but have us be
Good sons of mother soil, whereby to grow
Branching on fairer skies, one stately tree;
Broad of the tilth for flowering at the Court:
Which is the tree bound fast to wave its tress;

Of strength controlled sheer beauty to bestow.
Ambrosial heights of possible acquist,
Where souls of men with soul of man consort,
And all look higher to new loveliness
Begotten of the look: thy mark is there;
While on our temporal ground alive,
Rightly though fearfully thou wieldest sword,
Of finer temper now a numbered learn
That they resisting thee themselves resist;
And not thy bigger joy to smite and drive,
Prompt the dense herd to butt, and set the snare
Witching them into pitfalls for hoarse shouts.
More now, and hourly more, and of the Lord
Thou lead'st to, doth this rebel heart discern,
When pinched ascetic and red sensualist
Alternately recurrent freeze or burn,
And of its old religions it has doubts.
It fears thee less when thou hast shown it bare;
Less hates, part understands, nor much resents,
When the prized objects it has raised for prayer,
For fitful prayer;—repentance dreading fire,
Impelled by aches; the blindness which repents
Like the poor trampled worm that writhes in mire;—
Are sounded by thee, and thou darest probe

TO THE COMIC SPIRIT

Old Institutions and Establishments,
Once fortresses against the floods of sin,
For what their worth; and questioningly prod
For why they stand upon a racing globe,
Impeding blocks, less useful than the clod;
Their angel out of them, a demon in.

This half-enlightened heart, still doomed to fret,
To hurl at vanities, to drift in shame
Of gain or loss, bewailing the sure rod,
Shall of predestination wed thee yet.
Something it gathers of what things should drop
At entrance on new times; of how thrice broad
The world of minds communicative; how
A straggling Nature classed in school, and scored
With stripes admonishing, may yield to plough
Fruitfullest furrows, nor for waxing tame
Be feeble on an Earth whose gentler crop
Is its most living, in the mind that steers,
By Reason led, her way of tree and flame,
Beyond the genuflexions and the tears;
Upon an Earth that cannot stop,
Where upward is the visible aim,
And ever we espy the greater God,

TO THE COMIC SPIRIT

For simple pointing at a good adored:
Proof of the closer neighbourhood. Head on,
Sword of the many, light of the few! untwist
Or cut our tangles till fair space is won
Beyond a briared wood of austere brow,
Relieved of discord by thy timely word
At intervals refreshing life: for thou
Art verily Keeper of the Muse's Key;
Thyself no vacant melodist;
On lower land elective even as she;
Holding, as she, all dissonance abhorred;
Advising to her measured steps in flow;
And teaching how for being subjected free
Past thought of freedom we may come to know
The music of the meaning of Accord.

YOUTH IN MEMORY

Days, when the ball of our vision
Had eagles that flew unabashed to sun;
When the grasp on the bow was decision,
And arrow and hand and eye were one;
When the Pleasures, like waves to a swimmer,
Came heaving for rapture ahead!—
Invoke them, they dwindle, they glimmer
As lights over mounds of the dead.

Behold the winged Olympus, off the mead,
With thunder of wide pinions, lightning speed,
Wafting the shepherd-boy through ether clear,
To bear the golden nectar-cup.
So flies desire at view of its delight,
When the young heart is tiptoe perched on sight.
We meanwhile who in hues of the sick year,
The Spring-time paint to prick us for our lost,
Mount but the fatal half way up—
Whereon shut eyes! This is decreed,

YOUTH IN MEMORY

For Age that would to youthful heavens ascend,
By passion for the arms' possession tossed,
It falls the way of sighs and hath their end;
A spark gone out to more sepulchral night.
Good if the arrowy eagle of the height,
Be then the little bird that hops to feed.

Lame falls the cry to kindle days
Of radiant orb and daring gaze.
It does but clank our mortal chain.
For Earth reads through her felon old,
The many-numbered of her fold,
Who forward tottering backward strain,
And would be thieves of treasure spent,
With their grey season soured.
She could write out their history in their thirst
To have again the much devoured,
And be the bud at burst;
In honey fancy join the flow,
Where Youth swims on as once they went,
All choiric for spontaneous glee
Of active eager lungs and thews;
They now bared roots beside the river bent;

Whose privilege themselves to see;
Their place in yonder tideway know;
The current glass peruse;
The depths intently sound;
And sapped by each returning flood,
Accept for monitory nourishment,
Those worn roped features under crust of mud,
Reflected in the silvery smooth around:
Not less the branching and high singing tree,
A home of nests, a landmark and a tent,
Until their hour for losing hold on ground.
Even such good harvest of the things that flee,
Earth offers her subjected, and they choose
Rather of Bacchic Youth one beam to drink,
And warm slow marrow with the sensual wink.
So block they at her source the Mother of the Muse.

Who cheerfully the little bird becomes,
Without a fall, and pipes for peck at crumbs,
May have her dolings to the lightest touch;
As where some cripple muses by his crutch,
Unwitting that the spirit in him sings:
'When I had legs, then had I wings,

As good as any born of eggs,
To feed on all aërial things,
When I had legs!'
And if not to embrace he sighs,
She gives him breath of Youth awhile,
Perspective of a breezy mile,
Companionable hedgeways, lifting skies;
Scenes where his nested dreams upon their hoard
Brooded, or up to empyrean soared:
Enough to link him with a dotted line.
But cravings for an eagle's flight,
To top white peaks and serve wild wine
Among the rosy undecayed,
Bring only flash of shade
From her full throbbing breast of day in night.
By what they crave are they betrayed:
And cavernous is that young dragon's jaw,
Crimson for all the fiery reptile saw
In time now coveted, for teeth to flay,
Once more consume, were Life recurrent May.
They to their moment of drawn breath,
Which is the life that makes the death,
The death that makes ethereal life would bind:
The death that breeds the spectre do they find.

YOUTH IN MEMORY

Darkness is wedded and the waste regrets
Beating as dead leaves on a fitful gust,
By souls no longer dowered to climb
Beneath their pack of dust,
Whom envy of a lustrous prime,
Eclipsed while yet invoked, besets,
And dooms to sink and water sable flowers,
That never gladdened eye or loaded bee.
Strain we the arms for Memory's hours,
We are the seized Persephone.

Responsive never to the soft desire
For one prized tune is this our chord of life.
'Tis clipped to deadness with a wanton knife,
In wishes that for ecstasies aspire.
Yet have we glad companionship of Youth,
Elysian meadows for the mind,
Dare we to face deeds done, and in our tomb
Filled with the parti-coloured bloom
Of loved and hated, grasp all human truth
Sowed by us down the mazy paths behind.
To feel that heaven must we that hell sound through:
Whence comes a line of continuity,

That brings our middle station into view,
Between those poles; a novel Earth we see,
In likeness of us, made of banned and blest;
The sower's bed, but not the reaper's rest:
An Earth alive with meanings, wherein meet
Buried, and breathing, and to be.
Then of the junction of the three,
Even as a heart in brain, full sweet
May sense of soul, the sum of music, beat.

Only the soul can walk the dusty track
Where hangs our flowering under vapours black,
And bear to see how these pervade, obscure,
Quench recollection of a spacious pure.
They take phantasmal forms, divide, convolve,
Hard at each other point and gape,
Horrible ghosts! in agony dissolve,
To reappear with one they drape
For criminal, and, Father! shrieking name,
Who such distorted issue did beget.
Accept them, them and him, though hiss thy sweat
Off brow on breast, whose furnace flame
Has eaten, and old Self consumes.

Out of the purification will they leap,
Thee renovating while new light illumes
The dusky web of evil, known as pain,
That heavily up healthward mounts the steep;
Our fleshly road to beacon-fire of brain:
Midway the tameless oceanic brute
Below, whose heave is topped with foam for fruit,
And the fair heaven reflecting inner peace
On righteous warfare, that asks not to cease.

Forth of such passage through black fire we win
Clear hearing of the simple lute,
Whereon, and not on other, Memory plays
For them who can in quietness receive
Her restorative airs: a ditty thin
As note of hedgerow bird in ear of eve,
Or wave at ebb, the shallow catching rays
On a transparent sheet, where curves a glass
To truer heavens than when the breaker neighs
Loud at the plunge for bubbly wreck in roar.
Solidity and bulk and martial brass,
Once tyrants of the senses, faintly score
A mark on pebbled sand or fluid slime,

YOUTH IN MEMORY

While present in the spirit, vital there,
Are things that seemed the phantoms of their time;
Eternal as the recurrent cloud, as air
Imperative, refreshful as dawn-dew.
Some evanescent hand on vapour scrawled
Historic of the soul, and heats anew
Its coloured lines where deeds of flesh stand bald.
True of the man, and of mankind 'tis true.
Did we stout battle with the Shade, Despair,
Our cowardice, it blooms; or haply warred
Against the primal beast in us, and flung;
Or cleaving mists of Sorrow, left it starred
Above self-pity slain: or it was Prayer
First taken for Life's cleanser; or the tongue
Spake for the world against this heart; or rings
Old laughter, from the founts of wisdom sprung;
Or clap of wing of joy, that was a throb
From breast of Earth, and did no creature rob:
These quickening live. But deepest at her springs,
Most filial, is an eye to love her young.
And had we it, to see with it, alive
Is our lost garden, flower, bird and hive.
Blood of her blood, aim of her aim, are then
The green-robed and grey-crested sons of men:

She tributary to her aged restores
The living in the dead; she will inspire
Faith homelier than on the Yonder shores,
Abhorring these as mire,
Uncertain steps, in dimness gropes,
With mortal tremours pricking hopes,
And, by the final Bacchic of the lusts
Propelled, the Bacchic of the spirit trusts:
A fervour drunk from mystic hierophants;
Not utterly misled, though blindly led,
Led round fermenting eddies. Faith she plants
In her own firmness as our midway road:
Which rightly Youth has read, though blindly read;
Her essence reading in her toothsome goad;
Spur of bright dreams experience disenchants.
But love we well the young, her road midway
The darknesses runs consecrated clay.
Despite our feeble hold on this green home,
And the vast outer strangeness void of dome,
Shall we be with them, of them, taught to feel,
Up to the moment of our prostrate fall,
The life they deem voluptuously real,
Is more than empty echo of a call,
Or shadow of a shade, or swing of tides;

YOUTH IN MEMORY

As brooding upon age, when veins congeal,
Grey palsy nods to think. With us for guides,
Another step above the animal,
To views in Alpine thought are they helped on.
Good if so far we live in them when gone!

And there the arrowy eagle of the height,
Becomes the little bird that hops to feed,
Glad of a crumb, for tempered appetite
To make it wholesome blood and fruitful seed.
Then Memory strikes on no slack string,
Nor sectional will varied Life appear:
Perforce of soul discerned in mind, we hear
Earth with her Onward chime, with Winter Spring.
And ours the mellow note, while sharing joys
No more subjecting mortals who have learnt
To build for happiness on equipoise,
The Pleasures read in sparks of substance burnt;
Know in our seasons an integral wheel,
That rolls us to a mark may yet be willed.
This, the truistic rubbish under heel
Of all the world, we peck at and are filled.

VERSES

VERSES

PENETRATION AND TRUST

I

Sleek as a lizard at round of a stone,
The look of her heart slipped out and in.
Sweet on her lord her soft eyes shone,
As innocents clear of a shade of sin.

II

He laid a finger under her chin,
His arm for her girdle at waist was thrown:
Now, what will happen and who will win,
With me in the fight and my lady lone?

III

He clasped her, clasping a shape of stone;
Was fire on her eyes till they let him in.
Her breast to a God of the daybeams shone,
And never a corner for serpent sin.

IV

Tranced she stood, with a chattering chin;
Her shrunken form at his feet was thrown:
At home to the death my lord shall win,
When it is no tyrant who leaves me lone!

NIGHT OF FROST IN MAY

With splendour of a silver day,
A frosted night had opened May:
And on that plumed and armoured night,
As one close temple hove our wood,
Its border leafage virgin white.
Remote down air an owl hallooed.
The black twig dropped without a twirl;
The bud in jewelled grasp was nipped;
The brown leaf cracked a scorching curl;
A crystal off the green leaf slipped.
Across the tracks of rimy tan,
Some busy thread at whiles would shoot;
A limping minnow-rillet ran,
To hang upon an icy foot.

In this shrill hush of quietude,
The ear conceived a severing cry.
Almost it let the sound elude,
When chuckles three, a warble shy,

From hazels of the garden came,
Near by the crimson-windowed farm.
They laid the trance on breath and frame,
A prelude of the passion-charm.

Then soon was heard, not sooner heard
Than answered, doubled, trebled, more,
Voice of an Eden in the bird
Renewing with his pipe of four
The sob: a troubled Eden, rich
In throb of heart: unnumbered throats
Flung upward at a fountain's pitch,
The fervour of the four long notes,
That on the fountain's pool subside,
Exult and ruffle and upspring:
Endless the crossing multiplied
Of silver and of golden string.
There chimed a bubbled underbrew
With witch-wild spray of vocal dew.

It seemed a single harper swept
Our wild wood's inner chords and waked
A spirit that for yearning ached
Ere men desired and joyed or wept.

Or now a legion ravishing
Musician rivals did unite
In love of sweetness high to sing
The subtle song that rivals light;
From breast of earth to breast of sky:
And they were secret, they were nigh:
A hand the magic might disperse;
The magic swung my universe.

Yet sharpened breath forbade to dream,
Where all was visionary gleam;
Where Seasons, as with cymbals, clashed;
And feelings, passing joy and woe,
Churned, gurgled, spouted, interflashed,
Nor either was the one we know:
Nor pregnant of the heart contained
In us were they, that griefless plained,
That plaining soared; and through the heart
Struck to one note the wide apart:—
A passion surgent from despair;
A paining bliss in fervid cold;
Off the last vital edge of air,
Leap heavenward of the lofty-souled,

For rapture of a wine of tears;
As had a star among the spheres
Caught up our earth to some mid-height
Of double life to ear and sight,
She giving voice to thought that shines
Keen-brilliant of her deepest mines;
While steely drips the rillet clinked,
And hoar with crust the cowslip swelled.

Then was the lyre of earth beheld,
Then heard by me: it holds me linked;
Across the years to dead-ebb shores
I stand on, my blood-thrill restores.
But would I conjure into me
Those issue notes, I must review
What serious breath the woodland drew;
The low throb of expectancy;
How the white mother-muteness pressed
On leaf and meadow-herb; how shook,
Nigh speech of mouth, the sparkle-crest
Seen spinning on the bracken-crook.

THE TEACHING OF THE NUDE

THE TEACHING OF THE NUDE

I

A Satyr spied a Goddess in her bath,
Unseen of her attendant nymphs; none knew.
Forthwith the creature to his fellows drew,
And looking backward on the curtained path,
He strove to tell; he could but heave a breast
Too full, and point to mouth, with failing leers:
Vainly he danced for speech, he giggled tears,
Made as if torn in two, as if tight pressed,
As if cast prone; then fetching whimpered tunes
For words, flung heel and set his hairy flight
Through forest-hollows, over rocky height.
The green leaves buried him three rounds of moons.
A senatorial Satyr named what herb
Had hurried him outrunning reason's curb.

THE TEACHING OF THE NUDE

II

'Tis told how when that hieaway unchecked,
To dell returned, he seemed of tempered mood:
Even as the valley of the torrent rude,
The torrent now a brook, the valley wrecked.
In him, to hale him high or hurl aheap,
Goddess and Goatfoot hourly wrestled sore;
Hourly the immortal prevailing more:
Till one hot noon saw Meliboeus peep
From thicket-sprays to where his full-blown dame,
In circle by the lusty friskers gripped,
Laughed the showered rose-leaves while her limbs were stripped.
She beckoned to our Satyr, and he came.
Then twirled she mounds of ripeness, wreath of arms.
His hoof kicked up the clothing for such charms.

BREATH OF THE BRIAR

I

O briar-scents, on yon wet wing
Of warm South-west wind brushing by,
You mind me of the sweetest thing
That ever mingled frank and shy:
When she and I, by love enticed,
Beneath the orchard-apples met,
In equal halves a ripe one sliced,
And smelt the juices ere we ate.

II

That apple of the briar-scent,
Among our lost in Britain now,
Was green of rind, and redolent
Of sweetness as a milking cow.
The briar gives it back, well nigh
The damsel with her teeth on it;
Her twinkle between frank and shy,
My thirst to bite where she had bit.

EMPEDOCLES

I

He leaped. With none to hinder,
Of Aetna's fiery scoriae
In the next vomit-shower, made he
A more peculiar cinder.
And this great Doctor, can it be,
He left no saner recipe
For men at issue with despair?
Admiring, even his poet owns,
While noting his fine lyric tones,
The last of him was heels in air!

II

Comes Reverence, her features
Amazed to see high Wisdom hear,
With glimmer of a faunish leer,
One mock her pride of creatures.
Shall such sad incident degrade

A stature casting sunniest shade?
O Reverence! let Reason swim;
Each life its critic deed reveals;
And him reads Reason at his heels,
If heels in air the last of him!

TO COLONEL CHARLES

(Dying General C.B.B.)

I

An English heart, my commandant,
A soldier's eye you have, awake
To right and left; with looks askant
On bulwarks not of adamant,
Where white our Channel waters break.

II

Where Grisnez winks at Dungeness
Across the ruffled strip of salt,
You look, and like the prospect less.
On men and guns would you lay stress,
To bid the Island's foemen halt.

III

While loud the Year is raising cry
At birth to know if it must bear
In history the bloody dye,
An English heart, a soldier's eye,
For the old country first will care.

IV

And how stands she, artillerist,
Among the vapours waxing dense,
With cannon charged? 'Tis hist! and hist!
And now she screws a gouty fist,
And now she counts to clutch her pence.

V

With shudders chill as aconite,
The couchant chewer of the cud
Will start at times in pussy fright
Before the dogs, when reads her sprite
The streaks predicting streams of blood.

VI

She thinks they may mean something; thinks
They may mean nothing: haply both.
Where darkness all her daylight drinks,
She fain would find a leader lynx,
Not too much taxing mental sloth.

VII

Cleft like the fated house in twain,
One half is, Arm! and one, Retrench!
Gambetta's word on dull MacMahon:
'The cow that sees a passing train':
So spies she Russian, German, French.

VIII

She? no, her weakness: she unbraced
Among those athletes fronting storms!
The muscles less of steel than paste,
Why, they of nature feel distaste
For flash, much more for push, of arms.

IX

The poet sings, and well know we,
That 'iron draws men after it.'
But towering wealth may seem the tree
Which bears the fruit *Indemnity*,
And draw as fast as battle's fit,

X

If feeble be the hand on guard,
Alas, alas! And nations are
Still the mad forces, though the scarred.
Should they once deem our emblem Pard
Wagger of tail for all save war;—

XI

Mechanically screwed to flail
His flanks by Presses conjuring fear;—
A money-bag with head and tail;—
Too late may valour then avail!
As you beheld, my cannonier,

TO COLONEL CHARLES

XII

When with the staff of Benedek,
On the plateau of Königgrätz,
You saw below that wedgeing speck;
Foresaw proud Austria rammed to wreck,
Where Chlum drove deep in smoky jets.

February 1887.

ENGLAND BEFORE THE STORM

ENGLAND BEFORE THE STORM

I

The day that is the night of days,
With cannon-fire for sun ablaze,
We spy from any billow's lift;
And England still this tidal drift!
Would she to sainted forethought vow
A space before the thunders flood,
That martyr of its hour might now
    Spare her the tears of blood.

II

Asleep upon her ancient deeds,
She hugs the vision plethora breeds,
And counts her manifold increase
Of treasure in the fruits of peace.
What curse on earth's improvident,
When the dread trumpet shatters rest,
Is wreaked, she knows, yet smiles content
    As cradle rocked from breast.

III

She, impious to the Lord of Hosts,
The valour of her offspring boasts,
Mindless that now on land and main
His heeded prayer is active brain.
No more great heart may guard the home,
Save eyed and armed and skilled to cleave
Yon swallower wave with shroud of foam,
We see not distant heave.

IV

They stand to be her sacrifice,
The sons this mother flings like dice,
To face the odds and brave the Fates;
As in those days of starry dates,
When cannon cannon's counterblast
Awakened, muzzle muzzle bowled,
And high in swathe of smoke the mast
Its fighting rag outrolled.

1891.

TARDY SPRING

Now the North wind ceases,
The warm South-west awakes;
Swift fly the fleeces,
Thick the blossom-flakes.

Now hill to hill has made the stride,
And distance waves the without end:
Now in the breast a door flings wide;
Our farthest smiles, our next is friend.
And song of England's rush of flowers
Is this full breeze with mellow stops,
That spins the lark for shine, for showers;
He drinks his hurried flight, and drops.
The stir in memory seem these things,
Which out of moistened turf and clay,
Astrain for light push patient rings,
Or leap to find the waterway.
'Tis equal to a wonder done,
Whatever simple lives renew

Their tricks beneath the father sun,
As though they caught a broken clue:
So hard was earth an eyewink back;
But now the common life has come,
The blotting cloud a dappled pack,
The grasses one vast underhum.
A City clothed in snow and soot,
With lamps for day in ghostly rows,
Breaks to the scene of hosts afoot,
The river that reflective flows:
And there did fog down crypts of street
Play spectre upon eye and mouth:—
Their faces are a glass to greet
This magic of the whirl for South.
A burly joy each creature swells
With sound of its own hungry quest;
Earth has to fill her empty wells,
And speed the service of the nest;
The phantom of the snow-wreath melt,
That haunts the farmer's look abroad,
Who sees what tomb a white night built,
Where flocks now bleat and sprouts the clod.
For iron Winter held her firm;
Across her sky he laid his hand;

TARDY SPRING

And bird he starved, he stiffened worm;
A sightless heaven, a shaven land.
Her shivering Spring feigned fast asleep,
The bitten buds dared not unfold:
We raced on roads and ice to keep
Thought of the girl we love from cold.

But now the North wind ceases,
The warm South-west awakes,
The heavens are out in fleeces,
And earth's green banner shakes.

JUGGLING JERRY

I

Pitch here the tent, while the old horse grazes:
By the old hedge-side we 'll halt a stage.
It 's nigh my last above the daisies:
My next leaf 'll be man's blank page.
Yes, my old girl! and it 's no use crying:
Juggler, constable, king, must bow.
One that outjuggles all 's been spying
Long to have me, and he has me now.

II

We 've travelled times to this old common:
Often we 've hung our pots in the gorse.
We 've had a stirring life, old woman!
You, and I, and the old grey horse.
Races, and fairs, and royal occasions,
Found us coming to their call:
Now they 'll miss us at our stations:
There 's a Juggler outjuggles all!

III

Up goes the lark, as if all were jolly!
  Over the duck-pond the willow shakes.
Easy to think that grieving 's folly,
  When the hand 's firm as driven stakes!
Ay, when we 're strong, and braced, and manful,
  Life 's a sweet fiddle: but we 're a batch
Born to become the Great Juggler's han'ful:
  Balls he shies up, and is safe to catch.

IV

Here 's where the lads of the village cricket:
  I was a lad not wide from here:
Couldn't I whip off the bail from the wicket?
  Like an old world those days appear!
Donkey, sheep, geese, and thatched ale-house—I
      know them!
  They are old friends of my halts, and seem,
Somehow, as if kind thanks I owe them:
  Juggling don't hinder the heart's esteem.

V

Juggling 's no sin, for we must have victual:
  Nature allows us to bait for the fool.

Holding one's own makes us juggle no little;
  But, to increase it, hard juggling 's the rule.
You that are sneering at my profession,
  Haven't you juggled a vast amount?
There 's the Prime Minister, in one Session,
  Juggles more games than my sins 'll count.

VI

I 've murdered insects with mock thunder:
  Conscience, for that, in men don't quail.
I 've made bread from the bump of wonder:
  That 's my business, and there 's my tale.
Fashion and rank all praised the professor:
  Ay! and I 've had my smile from the Queen:
Bravo, Jerry! she meant: God bless her!
  Ain't this a sermon on that scene?

VII

I've studied men from my topsy-turvy
  Close, and, I reckon, rather true.
Some are fine fellows: some, right scurvy:
  Most, a dash between the two.

But it 's a woman, old girl, that makes me
  Think more kindly of the race:
And it 's a woman, old girl, that shakes me
  When the Great Juggler I must face.

VIII

We two were married, due and legal:
  Honest we 've lived since we 've been one.
Lord! I could then jump like an eagle:
  You danced bright as a bit o' the sun.
Birds in a May-bush we were! right merry!
  All night we kiss'd, we juggled all day.
Joy was the heart of Juggling Jerry!
  Now from his old girl he 's juggled away.

IX

It 's past parsons to console us:
  No, nor no doctor fetch for me:
I can die without my bolus;
  Two of a trade, lass, never agree!
Parson and Doctor!—don't they love rarely,
  Fighting the devil in other men's fields!
Stand up yourself and match him fairly:
  Then see how the rascal yields!

X

I, lass, have lived no gipsy, flaunting
  Finery while his poor helpmate grubs:
Coin I 've stored, and you won't be wanting:
  You sha'n't beg from the troughs and tubs.
Nobly you 've stuck to me, though in his kitchen
  Many a Marquis would hail you Cook!
Palaces you could have ruled and grown rich in,
  But your old Jerry you never forsook.

XI

Hand up the chirper! ripe ale winks in it;
  Let 's have comfort and be at peace.
Once a stout draught made me light as a linnet.
  Cheer up! the Lord must have his lease.
May be—for none see in that black hollow—
  It 's just a place where we 're held in pawn,
And, when the Great Juggler makes as to swallow,
  It 's just the sword-trick—I ain't quite gone!

XII

Yonder came smells of the gorse, so nutty,
  Gold-like and warm: it 's the prime of May.

Better than mortar, brick and putty,
  Is God's house on a blowing day.
Lean me more up the mound; now I feel it:
  All the old heath-smells! Ain't it strange?
There 's the world laughing, as if to conceal it,
  But He 's by us, juggling the change.

XIII

I mind it well, by the sea-beach lying,
  Once—it 's long gone—when two gulls we beheld,
Which, as the moon got up, were flying
  Down a big wave that sparked and swelled.
Crack, went a gun: one fell: the second
  Wheeled round him twice, and was off for new
    luck:
There in the dark her white wing beckon'd:—
  Drop me a kiss—I 'm the bird dead-struck!

THE OLD CHARTIST

I

Whate'er I be, old England is my dam!
So there 's my answer to the judges, clear.
I 'm nothing of a fox, nor of a lamb;
I don't know how to bleat nor how to leer:
I 'm for the nation!
That 's why you see me by the wayside here,
Returning home from transportation.

II

It 's Summer in her bath this morn, I think.
I 'm fresh as dew, and chirpy as the birds:
And just for joy to see old England wink
Thro' leaves again, I could harangue the herds:
Isn't it something
To speak out like a man when you 've got words,
And prove you 're not a stupid dumb thing?

III

They shipp'd me off for it; I'm here again.
  Old England is my dam, whate'er I be!
Says I, I'll tramp it home, and see the grain:
  If you see well, you're king of what you see:
    Eyesight is having,
  If you're not given, I said, to gluttony.
    Such talk to ignorance sounds as raving.

IV

You dear old brook, that from his Grace's park
  Come bounding! on you run near my old town:
My lord can't lock the water; nor the lark,
  Unless he kills him, can my lord keep down.
    Up, is the song-note!
  I've tried it, too:—for comfort and renown,
    I rather pitch'd upon the wrong note.

V

I'm not ashamed: Not beaten 's still my boast:
  Again I'll rouse the people up to strike.
But home 's where different politics jar most.
  Respectability the women like.

This form, or that form,—
The Government may be hungry pike,
But don't you mount a Chartist platform!

VI

Well, well! Not beaten—spite of them, I shout;
And my estate is suffering for the Cause.—
Now, what is yon brown water-rat about,
Who washes his old poll with busy paws?
What does he mean by 't?
It 's like defying all our natural laws,
For him to hope that he 'll get clean by 't.

VII

His seat is on a mud-bank, and his trade
Is dirt:—he 's quite contemptible; and yet
The fellow 's all as anxious as a maid
To show a decent dress, and dry the wet.
Now it 's his whisker,
And now his nose, and ear: he seems to get
Each moment at the motion brisker!

VIII

To see him squat like little chaps at school,
  I could let fly a laugh with all my might.
He peers, hangs both his fore-paws:—bless that fool,
  He 's bobbing at his frill now!—what a sight!
    Licking the dish up,
  As if he thought to pass from black to white,
    Like parson into lawny bishop.

IX

The elms and yellow reed-flags in the sun,
  Look on quite grave:—the sunlight flecks his side;
And links of bindweed-flowers round him run,
  And shine up doubled with him in the tide.
    I 'm nearly splitting,
  But nature seems like seconding his pride,
    And thinks that his behaviour 's fitting.

X

That isle o' mud looks baking dry with gold,
  His needle-muzzle still works out and in.
It really is a wonder to behold,
  And makes me feel the bristles of my chin,

Judged by appearance,
I fancy of the two I 'm nearer Sin,
And might as well commence a clearance.

XI

And that 's what my fine daughter said:—she meant:
Pray, hold your tongue, and wear a Sunday face.
Her husband, the young linendraper, spent
Much argument thereon:—I 'm their disgrace.
Bother the couple!
I feel superior to a chap whose place
Commands him to be neat and supple.

XII

But if I go and say to my old hen:
I 'll mend the gentry's boots, and keep discreet,
Until they grow *too* violent,—why, then,
A warmer welcome I might chance to meet:
Warmer and better.
And if she fancies her old cock is beat,
And drops upon her knees—so let her!

XIII

She suffered for me:—women, you 'll observe,
  Don't suffer for a Cause, but for a man.
When I was in the dock she show'd her nerve:
  I saw beneath her shawl my old tea-can
    Trembling . . . she brought it
  To screw me for my work: she loath'd my plan,
    And therefore doubly kind I thought it.

XIV

I've never lost the taste of that same tea:
  That liquor on my logic floats like oil,
When I state facts, and fellows disagree.
  For human creatures all are in a coil;
    All may want pardon.
  I see a day when every pot will boil
    Harmonious in one great Tea-garden!

XV

We wait the setting of the Dandy's day,
  Before that time!—He 's furbishing his dress,—
He *will* be ready for it!—and I say,
  That yon old dandy rat amid the cress,—

Thanks to hard labour!—
If cleanliness is next to godliness,
The old fat fellow's heaven's neighbour!

XVI

You teach me a fine lesson, my old boy!
I've looked on my superiors far too long,
And small has been my profit as my joy.
You've done the right while I've denounced the wrong.
Prosper me later!
Like you I will despise the sniggering throng,
And please myself and my Creator.

XVII

I'll bring the linendraper and his wife
Some day to see you; taking off my hat.
Should they ask why, I'll answer: in my life
I never found so true a democrat.
Base occupation
Can't rob you of your own esteem, old rat!
I'll preach you to the British nation.

MARTIN'S PUZZLE

MARTIN'S PUZZLE

I

There she goes up the street with her book in her hand,
  And her Good morning, Martin! Ay, lass, how d'ye do?
Very well, thank you, Martin!—I can't understand!
  I might just as well never have cobbled a shoe!
I can't understand it. She talks like a song;
  Her voice takes your ear like the ring of a glass;
She seems to give gladness while limping along,
  Yet sinner ne'er suffer'd like that little lass.

II

First, a fool of a boy ran her down with a cart.
  Then, her fool of a father—a blacksmith by trade—
Why the deuce does he tell us it half broke his heart?
  His heart!—where's the leg of the poor little maid!
Well, that's not enough; they must push her down-
    stairs,
  To make her go crooked: but why count the list?
If it's right to suppose that our human affairs
  Are all order'd by heaven—there, bang goes my fist!

III

For if angels can look on such sights—never mind!
When you're next to blaspheming, it's best to be mum.
The parson declares that her woes weren't designed;
But, then, with the parson it's all kingdom-come.
Lose a leg, save a soul—a convenient text;
I call it Tea doctrine, not savouring of God.
When poor little Molly wants 'chastening,' why, next
The Archangel Michael might taste of the rod.

IV

But, to see the poor darling go limping for miles
To read books to sick people!—and just of an age
When girls learn the meaning of ribands and smiles!
Makes me feel like a squirrel that turns in a cage.
The more I push thinking the more I revolve:
I never get farther:—and as to her face,
It starts up when near on my puzzle I solve,
And says, 'This crush'd body seems such a sad case.'

V

Not that she's for complaining: she reads to earn pence;
And from those who can't pay, simple thanks are enough.
Does she leave lamentation for chaps without sense?
Howsoever, she's made up of wonderful stuff.
Ay, the soul in her body must be a stout cord;
She sings little hymns at the close of the day,
Though she has but three fingers to lift to the Lord,
And only one leg to kneel down with to pray.

VI

What I ask is, Why persecute such a poor dear,
If there's Law above all? Answer that if you can!
Irreligious I'm not; but I look on this sphere
As a place where a man should just think like a man.
It isn't fair dealing! But, contrariwise,
Do bullets in battle the wicked select?
Why, then it's all chance-work! And yet, in her eyes,
She holds a fixed something by which I am checked.

VII

Yonder riband of sunshine aslope on the wall,
  If you eye it a minute 'll have the same look:
So kind! and so merciful! God of us all!
  It 's the very same lesson we get from the Book.
Then, is Life but a trial? Is that what is meant?
  Some must toil, and some perish, for others below:
The injustice to each spreads a common content;
  Ay! I've lost it again, for it can't be quite so.

VIII

She 's the victim of fools: that seems nearer the mark.
  On earth there are engines and numerous fools.
Why the Lord can permit them, we 're still in the dark;
  He does, and in some sort of way they 're His tools.
It 's a roundabout way, with respect let me add,
  If Molly goes crippled that we may be taught:
But, perhaps, it 's the only way, though it 's so bad;
  In that case we 'll bow down our heads,—as we ought.

IX

But the worst of *me* is, that when I bow my head,
  I perceive a thought wriggling away in the dust,
And I follow its tracks, quite forgetful, instead
  Of humble acceptance: for, question, I must!
Here 's a creature made carefully—carefully made!
  Put together with craft, and then stamped on, and
    why?
The answer seems nowhere: it 's discord that 's played.
  The sky 's a blue dish!—an implacable sky!

X

Stop a moment: I seize an idea from the pit.
  They tell us that discord, though discord, alone,
Can be harmony when the notes properly fit:
  Am I judging all things from a single false tone?
Is the Universe one immense Organ, that rolls
  From devils to angels? I 'm blind with the sight.
It pours such a splendour on heaps of poor souls!
  I might try at kneeling with Molly to-night.

MARIAN

MARIAN

I

She can be as wise as we,
    And wiser when she wishes;
She can knit with cunning wit,
    And dress the homely dishes.
She can flourish staff or pen,
    And deal a wound that lingers;
She can talk the talk of men,
    And touch with thrilling fingers.

II

Match her ye across the sea,
    Natures fond and fiery;
Ye who zest the turtle's nest
    With the eagle's eyrie.
Soft and loving is her soul,
    Swift and lofty soaring;
Mixing with its dove-like dole
    Passionate adoring.

MARIAN

III

Such a she who 'll match with me?
    In flying or pursuing,
Subtle wiles are in her smiles
    To set the world a-wooing.
She is steadfast as a star,
    And yet the maddest maiden:
She can wage a gallant war,
    And give the peace of Eden.

POEMS WRITTEN IN EARLY YOUTH

POEMS
1851

POEMS 1851

THE OLIVE BRANCH

A dove flew with an Olive Branch;
It crossed the sea and reached the shore,
And on a ship about to launch,
Dropped down the happy sign it bore.

'An omen' rang the glad acclaim!
The Captain stooped and picked it up,
'Be then the Olive Branch her name,'
Cried she who flung the christening cup.

The vessel took the laughing tides;
It was a joyous revelry
To see her dashing from her sides
The rough, salt kisses of the sea.

And forth into the bursting foam
She spread her sail and sped away,
The rolling surge her restless home,
Her incense wreaths the showering spray.

Far out, and where the riot waves
Run mingling in tumultuous throngs,
She danced above a thousand graves,
And heard a thousand briny songs.

Her mission with her manly crew,
Her flag unfurl'd, her title told,
She took the Old World to the New,
And brought the New World to the Old.

Secure of friendliest welcomings,
She swam the havens sheening fair;
Secure upon her glad white wings,
She fluttered on the ocean air.

To her no more the bastioned fort
Shot out its swarthy tongue of fire;
From bay to bay, from port to port,
Her coming was the world's desire.

And tho' the tempest lashed her oft,
And tho' the rocks had hungry teeth,
And lightnings split the masts aloft,
And thunders shook the planks beneath,

And tho' the storm, self-willed and blind,
Made tatters of her dauntless sail,
And all the wildness of the wind
Was loosed on her, she did not fail;

But gallantly she ploughed the main,
And gloriously her welcome pealed,
And grandly shone to sky and plain
The goodly bales her decks revealed;

Brought from the fruitful eastern glebes
Where blow the gusts of balm and spice,
Or where the black blockaded ribs
Are jammed 'mongst ghostly fleets of ice,

Or where upon the curling hills
Glow clusters of the bright-eyed grape,
Or where the hand of labour drills
The stubbornness of earth to shape.

Rich harvestings and wealthy germs,
And handicrafts and shapely wares,
And spinnings of the hermit worms,
And fruits that bloom by lions' lairs.

Come, read the meaning of the deep!
The use of winds and waters learn!
'Tis not to make the mother weep
For sons that never will return;

'Tis not to make the nations show
Contempt for all whom seas divide;
'Tis not to pamper war and woe,
Nor feed traditionary pride;

'Tis not to make the floating bulk
Mask death upon its slippery deck,
Itself in turn a shattered hulk,
A ghastly raft, a bleeding wreck.

It is to knit with loving lip
The interests of land to land;
To join in far-seen fellowship
The tropic and the polar strand.

It is to make that foaming Strength
Whose rebel forces wrestle still
Thro' all his boundaried breadth and length,
Become a vassal to our will.

It is to make the various skies,
And all the various fruits they vaunt,
And all the dowers of earth we prize,
Subservient to our household want.

And more, for knowledge crowns the gain
Of intercourse with other souls,
And Wisdom travels not in vain
The plunging spaces of the poles.

The wild Atlantic's weltering gloom,
Earth-clasping seas of North and South,
The Baltic with its amber spume,
The Caspian with its frozen mouth;

The broad Pacific, basking bright,
And girdling lands of lustrous growth,
Vast continents and isles of light,
Dumb tracts of undiscovered sloth.

She visits these, traversing each;
They ripen to the common sun;
Thro' diverse forms and different speech,
The world's humanity is one.

O may her voice have power to say
How soon the wrecking discords cease,
When every wandering wave is gay
With golden argosies of peace!

Now when the ark of human fate,
Long baffled by the wayward wind,
Is drifting with its peopled freight,
Safe haven on the heights to find;

Safe haven from the drowning slime
Of evil deeds and Deluge wrath;—
To plant again the foot of Time
Upon a purer, firmer path;

'Tis now the hour to probe the ground,
To watch the Heavens, to speak the word,
The fathoms of the deep to sound,
And send abroad the missioned bird.

On strengthened wing for evermore,
Let Science, swiftly as she can,
Fly seaward on from shore to shore,
And bind the links of man to man;

And like that fair propitious Dove,
Bless future fleets about to launch;
Make every freight a freight of love,
And every ship an Olive Branch.

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

SONG

Love within the lover's breast
Burns like Hesper in the west,
O'er the ashes of the sun,
Till the day and night are done;
Then when dawn drives up her car—
Lo! it is the morning star.

Love! thy love pours down on mine
As the sunlight on the vine,
As the snow-rill on the vale,
As the salt breeze in the sail;
As the song unto the bird,
On my lips thy name is heard.

As a dewdrop on the rose
In thy heart my passion glows,
As a skylark to the sky,
Up into thy breast I fly;
As a sea-shell of the sea
Ever shall I sing of thee.

THE WILD ROSE AND THE SNOWDROP

The Snowdrop is the prophet of the flowers;
It lives and dies upon its bed of snows;
And like a thought of spring it comes and goes,
Hanging its head beside our leafless bowers.
The sun's betrothing kiss it never knows,
Nor all the glowing joy of golden showers;
But ever in a placid, pure repose,
More like a spirit with its look serene,
Droops its pale cheek veined thro' with infant green.

Queen of her sisters is the sweet Wild Rose,
Sprung from the earnest sun and ripe young June;
The year's own darling and the Summer's Queen!
Lustrous as the new-throned crescent moon.
Much of that early prophet look she shows,
Mixed with her fair espoused blush which glows,
As if the ethereal fairy blood were seen;
Like a soft evening over sunset snows,
Half twilight violet shade, half crimson sheen.

Twin-born are both in beauteousness, most fair
In all that glads the eye and charms the air;
In all that wakes emotions in the mind
And sows sweet sympathies for human kind.
Twin-born, albeit their seasons are apart,
They bloom together in the thoughtful heart;
Fair symbols of the marvels of our state,
Mute speakers of the oracles of fate!

For each fulfilling nature's law, fulfils
Itself and its own aspirations pure;
Living and dying; letting faith ensure
New life when deathless Spring shall touch the hills.
Each perfect in its place; and each content
With that perfection which its being meant:
Divided not by months that intervene,
But linked by all the flowers that bud between.
Forever smiling thro' its season brief,
The one in glory and the one in grief:
Forever painting to our museful sight,
How lowlihead and loveliness unite.

Born from the first blind yearning of the earth
To be a mother and give happy birth,
Ere yet the northern sun such rapture brings,
Lo, from her virgin breast the Snowdrop springs;
And ere the snows have melted from the grass,
And not a strip of greensward doth appear,
Save the faint prophecy its cheeks declare,

Alone, unkissed, unloved, behold it pass!
While in the ripe enthronement of the year,
Whispering the breeze, and wedding the rich air
With her so sweet, delicious bridal breath,—
Odorous and exquisite beyond compare,
And starr'd with dews upon her forehead clear,
Fresh-hearted as a Maiden Queen should be
Who takes the land's devotion as her fee,—
The Wild Rose blooms, all summer for her dower,
Nature's most beautiful and perfect flower.

THE DEATH OF WINTER

When April with her wild blue eye
    Comes dancing over the grass,
And all the crimson birds so shy
    Peep out to see her pass;
As lightly she loosens her showery locks
    And flutters her rainy wings;
        Laughingly stoops
            To the glass of the stream,
        And loosens and loops
            Her hair by the gleam,
While all the young villagers blithe as the flocks
    Go frolicking round in rings;—
Then Winter, he who tamed the fly,
Turns on his back and prepares to die,
For he cannot live longer under the sky.

Down the valleys glittering green,
Down from the hills in snowy rills,
He melts between the border sheen
    And leaps the flowery verges!
He cannot choose, but brighten their hues,
And tho' he would creep, he fain must leap,
    For the quick Spring spirit urges.

Down the vale and down the dale,
He leaps and lights, till his moments fail,
Buried in blossoms, red and pale,
    While the sweet birds sing his dirges!

O Winter! I'd live that life of thine,
With a frosty brow and an icicle tongue,
And never a song my whole life long,—
Were such delicious burial mine!
To die and be buried, and so remain
A wandering brook in April's train,
Fixing my dying eyes for aye
On the dawning brows of maiden May.

SONG

The moon is alone in the sky
    As thou in my soul;
The sea takes her image to lie
    Where the white ripples roll
        All night in a dream,
        With the light of her beam,
Hushedly, mournfully, mistily up to the shore.
        The pebbles speak low
        In the ebb and the flow,
As I when thy voice came at intervals, tuned to adore:
        Nought other stirred
        Save my heart all unheard
Beating to bliss that is past evermore.

JOHN LACKLAND

A wicked man is bad enough on earth;
But O the baleful lustre of a chief
Once pledged in tyranny! O star of dearth
Darkly illumining a nation's grief!

How many men have worn thee on their brows!
Alas for them and us! God's precious gift
Of gracious dispensation got by theft—
The damning form of false unholy vows!
The thief of God and man must have his fee:
And thou John Lackland, despicable prince—
Basest of England's banes before or since!
Thrice traitor, coward, thief! O thou shalt be
The historic warning, trampled and abhorr'd
Who dared to steal and stain the symbols of the Lord!

THE SLEEPING CITY

A princess in the eastern tale
Paced thro' a marble city pale,
And saw on ghastly shapes of stone,
The sculptured life she breathed alone;

Saw, where'er her eye might range,
Herself the only child of change;
And heard her echoed footfall chime
Between Oblivion and Time;

And in the squares where fountains played,
And up the spiral balustrade,
Along the drowsy corridors,
Even to the inmost sleeping floors,

Surveyed in wonder chilled with dread,
The seemingness of Death, not dead;
Life's semblance but without its storm,
And silence frosting every form;

Crowned figures, cold and grouping slaves,
Like suddenly arrested waves
About to sink, about to rise,—
Strange meaning in their stricken eyes.

And cloths and couches live with flame
Of leopards fierce and lions tame,
And hunters in the jungle reed,
Thrown out by sombre glowing brede;

Dumb chambers hushed with fold on fold,
And cumbrous gorgeousness of gold;
White casements o'er embroidered seats,
Looking on solitudes of streets,—

On palaces and column'd towers,
Unconscious of the stony hours;
Harsh gateways startled at a sound,
With burning lamps all burnish'd round;—

Surveyed in awe this wealth and state,
Touched by the finger of a Fate,
And drew with slow-awakening fear,
The sternness of the atmosphere;—

And gradually with stealthier foot,
Became herself a thing as mute,
And listened,—while with swift alarm
Her alien heart shrank from the charm;

Yet as her thoughts dilating rose,
Took glory in the great repose,
And over every postured form
Spread lava-like and brooded warm,—

And fixed on every frozen face,
Beheld the record of its race,
And in each chiselled feature knew
The stormy life that once blushed thro';—

The ever-present of the past
There written; all that lightened last,
Love, anguish, hope, disease, despair,
Beauty and rage, all written there;—

Enchanted Passions! whose pale doom
Is never flushed by blight or bloom,
But sentinelled by silent orbs,
Whose light the pallid scene absorbs.—

Like such a one I pace along
This City with its sleeping throng;
Like her with dread and awe, that turns
To rapture, and sublimely yearns;—

For now the quiet stars look down
On lights as quiet as their own;
The streets that groaned with traffic, show
As if with silence paved below;

The latest revellers are at peace,
The signs of in-door tumult cease,
From gay saloon and low resort,
Comes not one murmur or report:

The clattering chariot rolls not by,
The windows show no waking eye,
The houses smoke not, and the air
Is clear, and all the midnight fair.

The centre of the striving world,
Round which the human fate is curled,
To which the future crieth wild,—
Is pillowed like a cradled child.

The palace roof that guards a crown,
The mansion swathed in dreamy down,
Hovel, court, and alley-shed,
Sleep in the calmness of the dead.

Now while the many-motived heart
Lies hushed—fireside and busy mart,
And mortal pulses beat the tune,
That charms the calm cold ear o' the moon

Whose yellowing crescent down the West
Leans listening, now when every breast
Its basest or its purest heaves,
The soul that joys, the soul that grieves ;—

While Fame is crowning happy brows
That day will blindly scorn, while vows
Of anguished love long hidden, speak
From faltering tongue and flushing cheek ;

The language only known to dreams,
Rich eloquence of rosy themes !
While on the Beauty's folded mouth,
Disdain just wrinkles baby youth ;

While Poverty dispenses alms
To outcasts, bread, and healing balms ;
While old Mammon knows himself
The greatest beggar for his pelf ;

While noble things in darkness grope,
The Statesman's aim, the Poet's hope ;
The Patriot's impulse gathers fire,
And germs of future fruits aspire ;—

Now while dumb nature owns its links,
And from one common fountain drinks,
Methinks in all around I see
This Picture in Eternity ;—

A marbled City planted there
With all its pageants and despair ;
A peopled hush, a Death not dead,
But stricken with Medusa's head ;—

And in the Gorgon's glance for aye
The lifeless immortality
Reveals in sculptured calmness all
Its latest life beyond recall.

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

THE POETRY OF CHAUCER

Grey with all honours of age! but fresh-featured and ruddy
As dawn when the drowsy farm-yard has thrice heard Chaunticlere.
Tender to tearfulness—childlike, and manly, and motherly;
Here beats true English blood richest joyance on sweet English ground.

THE POETRY OF SPENSER

Lakes where the sunsheen is mystic with splendour and softness;
Vales where sweet life is all Summer with golden romance;
Forests that glimmer with twilight round revel-bright palaces;
Here in our May-blood we wander, careering 'mongst ladies and knights.

THE POETRY OF SHAKESPEARE

Picture some Isle smiling green 'mid the white-foaming ocean;—
Full of old woods, leafy wisdoms, and frolicsome fays;
Passions and pageants; sweet love singing bird-like above it;
Life in all shapes, aims, and fates, is there warm'd by one great human heart.

THE POETRY OF MILTON

Like to some deep-chested organ whose grand inspiration,
Serenely majestic in utterance, lofty and calm,
Interprets to mortals with melody great as its burthen,
The mystical harmonies chiming for ever throughout the bright spheres.

THE POETRY OF SOUTHEY

Keen as an eagle whose flight towards the dim empyréan
Fearless of toil or fatigue ever royally wends!
Vast in the cloud-coloured robes of the balm-breathing Orient
Lo! the grand Epic advances, unfolding the humanest truth.

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

THE POETRY OF COLERIDGE

A brook glancing under green leaves, self-delighting, exulting,
And full of a gurgling melody ever renewed—
Renewed thro' all changes of Heaven, unceasing in sunlight,
Unceasing in moonlight, but hushed in the beams of the holier orb.

THE POETRY OF SHELLEY

See'st thou a Skylark whose glistening winglets ascending
Quiver like pulses beneath the melodious dawn?
Deep in the heart-yearning distance of heaven it flutters—
Wisdom and beauty and love are the treasures it brings down at eve.

THE POETRY OF WORDSWORTH

A breath of the mountains, fresh born in the regions majestic,
That look with their eye-daring summits deep into the sky.
The voice of great Nature; sublime with her lofty conceptions,
Yet earnest and simple as any sweet child of the green lowly vale.

c. 1851?

THE POETRY OF KEATS

The song of a nightingale sent thro' a slumbrous valley,
Low-lidded with twilight, and tranced with the dolorous sound,
Tranced with a tender enchantment; the yearning of passion
That wins immortality even while panting delirious with death.

VIOLETS

Violets, shy violets!
How many hearts with you compare!
Who hide themselves in thickest green,
And thence unseen,
Ravish the enraptured air
With sweetness, dewy fresh and rare!

Violets, shy violets!
Human hearts to me shall be
Viewless violets in the grass,
And as I pass,
Odours and sweet imagery
Will wait on mine and gladden me!

ANGELIC LOVE

Angelic love that stoops with heavenly lips
To meet its earthly mate;
Heroic love that to its sphere's eclipse,
Can dare to join its fate
With one beloved devoted human heart,
And share with it the passion and the smart,
The undying bliss
Of its most fleeting kiss;
The fading grace
Of its most sweet embrace:—
Angelic love, heroic love!
Whose birth can only be above,
Whose wandering must be on earth,
Whose haven where it first had birth!
Love that can part with all but its own worth,
And joy in every sacrifice
That beautifies its Paradise!
And gently like a golden-fruited vine,
With earnest tenderness itself consign,
And creeping up deliriously entwine
Its dear delicious arms
Round the beloved being!
With fair unfolded charms,
All-trusting, and all-seeing,—
Grape-laden with full bunches of young wine!
While to the panting heart's dry yearning drouth
Buds the rich dewy mouth—
Tenderly uplifted,
Like two rose-leaves drifted

'Down in a long warm sigh of the sweet South!
Such love, such love is thine,
Such heart is mine
O thou of mortal visions most divine!

TWILIGHT MUSIC

Know you the low pervading breeze
That softly sings
In the trembling leaves of twilight trees,
As if the wind were dreaming on its wings?
And have you marked their still degrees
Of ebbing melody, like the strings
Of a silver harp swept by a spirit's hand
In some strange glimmering land,
'Mid gushing springs,
And glistenings
Of waters and of planets, wild and grand!
And have you marked in that still time,
The chariots of those shining cars
Brighten upon the hushing dark,
And bent to hark
That Voice, amid the poplar and the lime,
Pause in the dilating lustre
Of the spheral cluster;
Pause but to renew its sweetness, deep
As dreams of heaven to souls that sleep!
And felt, despite earth's jarring wars,
When day is done
And dead the sun,
Still a voice divine can sing,
Still is there sympathy can bring
A whisper from the stars!
Ah, with this sentience quickly will you know,
How like a tree I tremble to the tones
Of your sweet voice!
How keenly I rejoice
When in me with sweet motions slow

The spiritual music ebbs and moans—
Lives in the lustre of those heavenly eyes,
Dies in the light of its own paradise,—
Dies, and relives eternal from its death,
Immortal melodies in each deep breath;
Sweeps thro' my being, bearing up to thee
Myself, the weight of its eternity;
Till nerved to life from its ordeal fire,
It marries music with the human lyre,
Blending divine delight with loveliest desire.

REQUIEM

Where faces are hueless, where eyelids are dewless,
Where passion is silent and hearts never crave;
Where thought hath no theme, and where sleep hath no dream,
In patience and peace thou art gone—to thy grave!
Gone where no warning can wake thee to morning,
Dead tho' a thousand hands stretch'd out to save.

Thou cam'st to us sighing, and singing and dying,
How could it be otherwise, fair as thou wert?
Placidly fading, and sinking and shading,
At last to that shadow, the latest desert;
Wasting and waning, but still, still remaining,
Alas for the hand that could deal the death-hurt!

The Summer that brightens, the Winter that whitens,
The world and its voices, the sea and the sky,
The bloom of creation, the tie of relation,
All—all is a blank to thine ear and thine eye;
The ear may not listen, the eye may not glisten,
Nevermore waked by a smile or a sigh.

The tree that is rootless must ever be fruitless;
And thou art alone in thy death and thy birth;
No last loving token of wedded love broken,
No sign of thy singleness, sweetness and worth;
Lost as the flower that is drowned in the shower,
Fall'n like a snowflake to melt in the earth.

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

THE FLOWER OF THE RUINS

Take thy lute and sing
By the ruined castle walls,
Where the torrent-foam falls,
And long weeds wave:
Take thy lute and sing,
O'er the grey ancestral grave!
Daughter of a King,
Tune thy string.

Sing of happy hours,
In the roar of rushing time;
Till all the echoes chime
To the days gone by;
Sing of passing hours
To the ever-present sky;—
Weep—and let the showers
Wake thy flowers.

Sing of glories gone:—
No more the blazoned fold
From the banner is unrolled;
The gold sun is set.
Sing his glory gone,
For thy voice may charm him yet;
Daughter of the dawn,
He is gone!

Pour forth all thy grief!
Passionately sweep the chords,
Wed them quivering to thy words;
Wild words of wail!
Shed thy withered grief—
But hold not Autumn to thy bale
The eddy of the leaf
Must be brief!

Sing up to the night:
Hard it is for streaming tears
To read the calmness of the spheres,
Coldly they shine;
Sing up to their light;
They have views thou may'st divine—
Gain prophetic sight
From their light!

On the windy hills
Lo, the little harebell leans
On the spire-grass that it queens,
With bonnet blue;
Trusting love instils
Love and subject reverence true,
Learn what love instils
On the hills!

By the bare wayside
Placid snowdrops hang their cheeks,
Softly touch'd with pale green streaks,
Soon, soon, to die;
On the clothed hedgeside
Bands of rosy beauties vie,
In their prophecied
Summer pride.

From the snowdrop learn;
Not in her pale life lives she,
But in her blushing prophecy.
Thus be thy hopes,
Living but to yearn
Upwards to the hidden copes;—
Even within the urn
Let them burn!

Heroes of thy race—
Warriors with golden crowns,
Ghostly shapes with marbled frowns

Stare thee to stone;
    Matrons of thy race
Pass before thee making moan;
    Full of solemn grace
        Is their pace.

    Piteous their despair!
Piteous their looks forlorn!
Terrible their ghostly scorn!
Still hold thou fast;—
    Heed not their despair!—
Thou art thy future, not thy past;
    Let them glance and glare
        Thro' the air.

    Thou the ruin's bud,
Be not that moist rich-smelling weed
With its arras-sembled brede,
And ruin-haunting stalk;
    Thou the ruin's bud,
Be still the rose that lights the walk,
    Mix thy fragrant blood
        With the flood!

THE RAPE OF AURORA

Never, O never,
    Since dewy sweet Flora,
Was ravished by Zephyr,
    Was such a thing heard
            In the valleys so hollow!
    Till rosy Aurora,
Uprising as ever,
    Bright Phosphor to follow,
Pale Phoebe to sever,
    Was caught like a bird
            To the breast of Apollo!

Wildly she flutters,
And flushes all over
With passionate mutters
Of shame to the hush
Of his amorous whispers:
But, O such a lover
Must win when he utters
Thro' rosy red lispers,
The pains that discover
The wishes that gush
From the torches of Hesperus.

One finger just touching
The Orient chamber,
Unflooded the gushing
Of light that illumed
All her lustrous unveiling.
On clouds of glow amber,
Her limbs richly blushing,
She lay sweetly wailing,
In odours that gloomed
On the God as he bloomed
O'er her loveliness paling.

Great Pan in his covert
Beheld the rare glistening,
The cry of the love-hurt,
The sigh and the kiss
Of the latest close mingling:
But 'love, thought he, listening,
Will not do a dove hurt
I know,—and a tingling,
Latent with bliss,
Prickt thro' him, I wis,
For the Nymph he was singling.

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

SOUTH-WEST WIND IN THE WOODLAND

The silence of preluded song—
Æolian silence charms the woods;
Each tree a harp, whose foliaged strings
Are waiting for the master's touch
To sweep them into storms of joy,
Stands mute and whispers not; the birds
Brood dumb in their foreboding nests,
Save here and there a chirp or tweet,
That utters fear or anxious love,
Or when the ouzel sends a swift
Half warble, shrinking back again
His golden bill, or when aloud
The storm-cock warns the dusking hills
And villages and valleys round:
For lo, beneath those ragged clouds
That skirt the opening west, a stream
Of yellow light and windy flame
Spreads lengthening southward, and the sky
Begins to gloom, and o'er the ground
A moan of coming blasts creeps low
And rustles in the crisping grass;
Till suddenly with mighty arms
Outspread, that reach the horizon round,
The great South-West drives o'er the earth,
And loosens all his roaring robes
Behind him, over heath and moor.
He comes upon the neck of night,
Like one that leaps a fiery steed
Whose keen black haunches quivering shine
With eagerness and haste, that needs
No spur to make the dark leagues fly!
Whose eyes are meteors of speed;
Whose mane is as a flashing foam;
Whose hoofs are travelling thunder-shocks;—
He comes, and while his growing gusts,

Wild couriers of his reckless course
Are whistling from the daggered gorse,
And hurrying over fern and broom,
Midway, far off, he feigns to halt
And gather in his streaming train.

Now, whirring like an eagle's wing
Preparing for a wide blue flight;
Now, flapping like a sail that tacks
And chides the wet bewildered mast;
Now, screaming like an anguish'd thing
Chased close by some down-breathing beak;
Now, wailing like a breaking heart,
That will not wholly break, but hopes
With hope that knows itself in vain;
Now, threatening like a storm-charged cloud;
Now, cooing like a woodland dove;
Now, up again in roar and wrath
High soaring and wide sweeping; now
With sudden fury dashing down
Full-force on the awaiting woods.

Long waited there, for aspens frail
That tinkle with a silver bell,
To warn the Zephyr of their love,
When danger is at hand, and wake
The neighbouring boughs, surrendering all
Their prophet harmony of leaves,
Had caught his earliest windward thought,
And told it trembling; naked birk
Down showering her dishevelled hair,
And like a beauty yielding up
Her fate to all the elements,
Had swayed in answer; hazels close,
Thick brambles and dark brushwood tufts,
And briared brakes that line the dells
With shaggy beetling brows, had sung
Shrill music, while the tattered flaws
Tore over them, and now the whole
Tumultuous concords, seized at once

With savage inspiration,—pine,
And larch, and beech, and fir, and thorn,
And ash, and oak, and oakling, rave
And shriek, and shout, and whirl, and toss,
And stretch their arms, and split, and crack,
And bend their stems, and bow their heads,
And grind, and groan, and lion-like
Roar to the echo-peopled hills
And ravenous wilds, and crake-like cry
With harsh delight, and cave-like call
With hollow mouth, and harp-like thrill
With mighty melodies, sublime,
From clumps of column'd pines that wave
A lofty anthem to the sky,
Fit music for a prophet's soul—
And like an ocean gathering power,
And murmuring deep, while down below,
Reigns calm profound;—not trembling now
The aspens, but like freshening waves
That fall upon a shingly beach;—
And round the oak a solemn roll
Of organ harmony ascends,
And in the upper foliage sounds
A symphony of distant seas.

The voice of nature is abroad
This night; she fills the air with balm;
Her mystery is o'er the land;
And who that hears her now and yields
His being to her yearning tones,
And seats his soul upon her wings,
And broadens o'er the wind-swept world
With her, will gather in the flight
More knowledge of her secret, more
Delight in her beneficence,
Than hours of musing, or the lore
That lives with men could ever give!
Nor will it pass away when morn
Shall look upon the lulling leaves,

And woodland sunshine, Eden-sweet,
Dreams o'er the paths of peaceful shade ;—
For every elemental power
Is kindred to our hearts, and once
Acknowledged, wedded, once embraced,
Once taken to the unfettered sense,
Once clasp't into the naked life,
The union is eternal.

WILL O' THE WISP

Follow me, follow me,
Over brake and under tree,
Thro' the bosky tanglery,
Brushwood and bramble!
Follow me, follow me,
Laugh and leap and scramble!
Follow, follow,
Hill and hollow,
Fosse and burrow,
Fen and furrow,
Down into the bulrush beds,
'Midst the reeds and osier heads,
In the rushy soaking damps,
Where the vapours pitch their camps,
Follow me, follow me,
For a midnight ramble!
O! what a mighty fog,
What a merry night O ho!
Follow, follow, nigher, nigher—
Over bank, and pond, and briar,
Down into the croaking ditches,
Rotten log,
Spotted frog,
Beetle bright
With crawling light,
What a joy O ho!
Deep into the purple bog—
What a joy O ho!

Where like hosts of puckered witches,
All the shivering agues sit
Warming hands and chafing feet,
By the blue marsh-hovering oils:
O the fools for all their moans!
Not a forest mad with fire
Could still their teeth, or warm their bones,
Or loose them from their chilly coils.
    What a clatter,
    How they chatter!
    Shrink and huddle,
    All a muddle,
        What a joy O ho!
Down we go, down we go,
        What a joy O ho!
Soon shall I be down below,
Plunging with a grey fat friar,
Hither, thither, to and fro,
Breathing mists and whisking lamps,
Plashing in the shiny swamps;
While my cousin Lantern Jack,
With cock ears and cunning eyes,
Turns him round upon his back,
Daubs him oozy green and black,
Sits upon his rolling size,
Where he lies, where he lies,
Groaning full of sack—
Staring with his great round eyes!
        What a joy O ho!
Sits upon him in the swamps
Breathing mists and whisking lamps!
        What a joy O ho!
Such a lad is Lantern Jack,
When he rides the black nightmare
Through the fens, and puts a glare
In the friar's track.
Such a frolic lad, good lack!
To turn a friar on his back,
Trip him, clip him, whip him, nip him.

Lay him sprawling, smack!
Such a lad is Lantern Jack!
Such a tricksy lad, good lack!
What a joy O ho!
Follow me, follow me,
Where he sits, and you shall see!

SONG

Fair and false! No dawn will greet
Thy waking beauty as of old;
The little flower beneath thy feet
Is alien to thy smile so cold;
The merry bird flown up to meet
Young morning from his nest i' the wheat,
Scatters his joy to wood and wold,
But scorns the arrogance of gold.

False and fair! I scarce know why,
But standing in the lonely air,
And underneath the blessed sky,
I plead for thee in my despair;—
For thee cut off, both heart and eye
From living truth; thy spring quite dry;
For thee, that heaven my thought may share,
Forget—how false! and think—how fair!

SONG

Two wedded lovers watched the rising moon,
That with her strange mysterious beauty glowing,
Over misty hills and waters flowing,
Crowned the long twilight loveliness of June:
And thus in me, and thus in me, they spake,
The solemn secret of first love did wake.

Above the hills the blushing orb arose ;
    Her shape encircled by a radiant bower,
    In which the nightingale with charméd power,
Poured forth enchantment o'er the dark repose :
    And thus in me, and thus in me they said,
    Earth's mists did with the sweet new spirit wed.

Far up the sky with ever purer beam,
    Upon the throne of night the moon was seated,
    And down the valley glens the shades retreated,
And silver light was on the open stream.
    And thus in me, and thus in me, they sighed,
    Aspiring Love has hallowed Passion's tide.

SONG

I cannot lose thee for a day,
    But like a bird with restless wing,
My heart will find thee far away,
    And on thy bosom fall and sing,
        My nest is here, my rest is here ;—
    And in the lull of wind and rain,
    Fresh voices make a sweet refrain,
        'His rest is there, his nest is there.'

With thee the wind and sky are fair,
    But parted, both are strange and dark ;
And treacherous the quiet air
    That holds me singing like a lark,
        O shield my love, strong arm above !
    Till in the hush of wind and rain,
    Fresh voices make a rich refrain,
        'The arm above, will shield thy love.'

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

DAPHNE

Musing on the fate of Daphne,
Many feelings urged my breast,
For the God so keen desiring,
And the Nymph so deep distrest.

Never flashed thro' sylvan valley,
Visions so divinely fair!
He with early ardour glowing,
She with rosy anguish rare.

Only still more sweet and lovely
For those terrors on her brows,
Those swift glances wild and brilliant,
Those delicious panting vows.

Timidly the timid shoulders
Shrinking from the fervid hand!
Dark the tide of hair back-flowing
From the blue-veined temples bland!

Lovely, too, divine Apollo
In the speed of his pursuit;
With his eye an azure lustre,
And his voice a summer lute!

Looking like some burnished eagle
Hovering o'er a fluttered bird;
Not unseen of silver Naiad,
And of wistful Dryad heard!

Many a morn the naked beauty
Saw her bright reflection drown
In the flowing smooth-faced river,
While the god came sheening down.

Down from Pindus bright Peneus
Tells its muse-melodious source;
Sacred is its fountained birthplace,
And the Orient floods its course.

Many a morn the sunny darling
Saw the rising chariot-rays,
From the winding river-reaches,
Mellowing in amber haze.

Thro' the flaming mountain gorges
Lo, the River leaps the plain;
Like a wild god-stridden courser,
Tossing high its foamy mane.

Then he swims thro' laurelled sunlight,
Full of all sensations sweet,
Misty with his morning incense,
To the mirrored maiden's feet!

Wet and bright the dinting pebbles
Shine where oft she paused and stood;
All her dreamy warmth revolving,
While the chilly waters wooed.

Like to rosy-born Aurora,
Glowing freshly into view,
When her doubtful foot she ventures
On the first cold morning blue.

White as that Thessalian lily,
Fairest Tempe's fairest flower,
Lo, the tall Peneian virgin,
Stands beneath her bathing bower.

There the laurell'd wreaths o'erarching
Crown'd the dainty shuddering maid;
There the dark prophetic laurel
Kiss'd her with its sister shade.

There the young green glistening leaflets
Hush'd with love their breezy peal;
There the little opening flowerets
Blush'd beneath her vermeil heel!

There among the conscious arbours,
Sounds of soft tumultuous wail,
Mysteries of love, melodious,
Came upon the lyric gale!

Breathings of a deep enchantment,
Effluence of immortal grace,
Flitted round her faltering footstep,
Spread a balm about her face!

Witless of the enamour'd presence,
Like a dreamy lotus bud
From its drowsy stem down-drooping,
Gazed she in the glowing flood.

Softly sweet with fluttering presage,
Felt she that ethereal sense,
Drinking charms of love delirious,
Reaping bliss of love intense!

All the air was thrill'd with sunrise,
Birds made music of her name,
And the god-impregnate water
Clasp't her image ere she came.

Richer for that glance unconscious!
Dearer for that soft dismay!
And the sudden self-possession!
And the smile as bright as day!

Plunging 'mid her scattered tresses,
With her blue invoking eyes;
See her like a star descending!
Like a rosebud see her rise!

Like a rosebud in the morning
Dashing off its jewell'd dews,
Ere unfolding all its fragrance
It is gathered by the muse!

Beauteous in the foamy laughter,
Bubbling round her shrinking waist,
Lo! from locks and lips and eyelids
Rain the glittering pearl-drops chaste!

And about the maiden rapture
Still the ruddy ripples play'd,
Ebbing round in startled circlets
When her arms began to wade.

Flowing in like tides attracted,
To the glowing crescent shine!
Clasping her ambrosial whiteness
Like an Autumn-tinted vine!

Sinking low with love's emotion!
Levying with look and tone
All love's rosy arts to mimic
Cytherea's magic zone!

Trembling up with adoration
To the crimson daisy tip,
Budding from the snowy bosom—
Fainter than the rose-red lip!

Rising in a storm of wavelets,
That for shelter, feigning fright,
Prest to those twin-heaving havens,
Harbour'd there beneath her light.

Gleaming in a whirl of eddies
Round her lucid throat and neck;
Eddying in a gleam of dimples
Up against her bloomy cheek.

Bribing all the breezy water
With rich warmth, the nymph to keep
In a self-imprison'd plaisance,
Tempting her from deep to deep.

Till at last delirious passion
Thrill'd the god to wild excess,
And the fervour of a moment
Made divinity confess;

And he stood in all his glory!
But so radiant, being near,
That her eyes were frozen on him
In a fascinated fear!

All with orient splendour shining,—
All with roseate birth aglow,
Gleam'd the golden god before her,
With his golden crescent bow.

Soon the dazzled light subsided,
And he seem'd a beauteous youth,
Form'd to gain the maiden's murmurs,
And to pledge the vows of truth.

Ah! that thus he had continued!
O, that such for her had been!
Graceful with all godlike beauty,
But so humanly serene!

Cheeks, and mouth, and mellow ringlets,
Bounteous as the mid-day beam;
Pleading looks and wistful tremour,
Tender as a maiden's dream!

Palms that like a bird's throbb'd bosom
Palpitate with eagerness,
Lips, the bridals of the roses,
Dewy sweet from the caress!

Lips and limbs, and eyes and ringlets,
Swaying, praying to one prayer,
Like a lyre, swept by a spirit,
In the still, enraptur'd air.

Like a lyre in some far valley,
Uttering ravishments divine!
All its strings to viewless fingers
Yearning, modulations fine!

Yearning with melodious fervour!
Like a beauteous maiden flower,
When the young beloved, three paces
Hovers from the bridal bower.

Throbbing thro' the dawning stillness!
As a heart within a breast,
When the young beloved is stepping
Radiant to the nuptial nest.

O for Daphne! gentle Daphne!
Ever warmer by degrees
Whispers full of hopes and visions,
Throng her ears like honey bees!

Never yet was lonely blossom
Woo'd with such delicious voice!
Never since hath mortal maiden
Dwelt on such celestial choice!

Love-suffused she quivers, falters—
Falters, sighs, but never speaks,
All her rosy blood up-gushing,
Overflows her ripe young cheeks.

Blushing, sweet with virgin blushes,
All her loveliness a-flame,
Stands she in the orient waters,
Stricken o'er with speechless shame!

Ah! but lovelier, ever lovelier,
As more deep the colour glows,
And the honey-laden lily
Changes to the fragrant rose.

While the god with meek embraces,
Whispering all his sacred charms,
Softly folds her, gently holds her,
In his white encircling arms!

But, O Dian! veil not wholly
Thy pale crescent from the morn!
Vanish not, O virgin goddess,
With that look of pallid scorn!

Still thy pure protecting influence
Shed from those fair watchful eyes!—
Lo! her angry orb has vanished,
And the bright sun thrones the skies!

Voicelessly the forest Virgin
Vanished! but one look she gave—
Keen as Niobean arrow
Thro' the maiden's heart it drave.

Thus toward that throning bosom
Where all earth is warmed,—each spot
Nourished with autumnal blessings—
Icy chill was Daphne caught.

Icy chill! but swift revulsion
All her gentler self renewed,
Even as icy Winter quickens
With bud-opening warmth imbued.

Even as a torpid brooklet
That to the night-gleaming moon
Flashed in turn the frozen glances,—
Melts upon the breast of noon.

But no more—O never, never,
Turns she to that bosom bright,
Swiftly all her senses counsel—
All her nerves are strung to flight.

O'er the brows of radiant Pindus
Rolls a shadow dark and cold,
And a sound of lamentation
Issues from its mournful fold.

Voice of the far-sighted Muses!
Cry of keen foreboding song!
Every cleft of startled Tempe
Tingles with it sharp and long.

Over bourn and bosk and dingle,
Over rivers, over rills,
Runs the sad subservient Echo
Toward the dim blue distant hills!

And another and another!
'Tis a cry more wild than all;
And the hills with muffled voices
Answer 'Daphne!' to the call.

And another and another!
'Tis a cry so wildly sweet,
That her charmed heart turns rebel
To the instinct of her feet;

And she pauses for an instant;
But his arms have scarcely slid
Round her waist in cestian girdles,
And his low voluptuous lid

Lifted pleading, and the honey
Of his mouth for her's athirst,
Ruby glistening, raised for moisture—
Like a bud that waits to burst

In the sweet espousing showers—
And his tongue has scarce begun
With its inarticulate burthen—
And the clouds scarce show the sun

As it pierces thro' a crevice
Of the mass that closed it o'er,
When again the horror flashes—
And she turns to flight once more!

And again o'er radiant Pindus
Rolls the shadow dark and cold,
And the sound of lamentation
Issues from its sable fold!

And again the light winds chide her
As she darts from his embrace—
And again the far-voiced echoes
Speak their tidings of the chase.

Loudly now as swiftly, swiftly,
O'er the glimmering sands she speeds;
Wildly now as in the furzes
From the piercing spikes she bleeds.

Deeply and with direful anguish
As above each crimson drop,
Passion checks the god Apollo,
And love bids him weep and stop.—

He above each drop of crimson
Shadowing—like the laurel leaf
That above himself will shadow,—
Sheds a fadeless look of grief.

Then with love's remorseful discord,
With its own desire at war,
Sighing turns, while dimly fleeting
Daphne flies the chase afar.

But all nature is against her!
Pan with all his sylvan troop,
Thro' the vista'd woodland valleys
Blocks her course with cry and whoop!

In the twilights of the thickets
Trees bend down their gnarled boughs,
Wild green leaves and low curved branches,
Hold her hair and beat her brows.

Many a brake of brushwood covert
Where cold darkness slumbers mute,
Slips a shrub to thwart her passage,
Slides a hand to clutch her foot.

Glens and glades of lushest verdure
Toil her in their tawny mesh,
Wilder-woofed ways and alleys
Lock her struggling limbs in leash.

Feathery grasses, flowery mosses,
Knot themselves to make her trip;
Sprays and stubborn sprigs outstretching,
Put a bridle on her lip;—

Many a winding lane betrays her,
Many a sudden bosky shoot,
And her knee makes many a stumble
O'er some hidden damp old root,

Whose quaint face peers green and dusky
'Mongst the matted growth of plants,
While she rises wild and weltering,
Speeding on with many pants.

Tangles of the wild red strawberry
Spread their freckled trammels frail;
In the pathway creeping brambles
Catch her in their thorny trail.

All the widely sweeping greensward
Shifts and swims from knoll to knoll;
Grey rough-fingered oak and elm wood
Push her by from bole to bole.

Groves of lemon, groves of citron,
Tall high-foliaged plane and palm,
Bloomy myrtle, light-blue olive,
Wave her back with gusts of balm.

Languid jasmine, scrambling briony,
Walls of close-festooning braid,
Fling themselves about her, mingling
With her wafted locks, waylaid.

Twisting bindweed, honey'd woodbine,
Cling to her, while, red and blue,
On her rounded form, ripe berries
Dash and die in gory dew.

Running ivies dark and lingering,
Round her light limbs drag and twine;
Round her waist with languorous tendrils
Reels and wreathes the juicy vine;—

Reining in the flying creature
With its arms about her mouth;
Bursting all its mellowing bunches
To seduce her husky drouth.

Crowning her with amorous clusters;
Pouring down her sloping back
Fresh-born wines in glittering rillets,
Following her in crimson track.

Buried, drenched in dewy foliage,
Thus she glimmers from the dawn,
Watched by every forest creature,
Fleet-foot Oread, frolic Faun,

Silver-sandalled Arethusa
Not more swiftly fled the sands,
Fled the plains and fled the sunlights,
Fled the murmuring ocean strands.

O, that now the earth would open!
O, that now the shades would hide!
O, that now the gods would shelter!
Caverns lead and seas divide!

Not more faint soft-lowing Io
Panted in those starry eyes,
When the sleepless midnight meadows
Piteously implored the skies!

Still her breathless flight she urges
By the sanctuary stream,
And the god with golden swiftness
Follows like an eastern beam.

Her the close bewildering greenery
Darkens with its duskiest green,—
Him each little leaflet welcomes,
Flushing with an orient sheen.

Thus he nears, and now all Tempe
Rings with his melodious cry,
Avenues and blue expanses
Beam in his large lustrous eye!

All the branches start to music!
As if from a secret spring
Thousands of sweet bills are bubbling
In the nest and on the wing.

Gleams and shines the glassy river
And rich valleys every one;
But of all the throbbing beauty
Brightest! singled by the Sun!

Ivy round her glimmering ancle,
Vine about her glowing brow,
Never sure was bride so beauteous,
Daphne, chosen nymph as thou!

Thus he nears! and now she feels him
Breathing hot on every limb;
And he hears her own quick pantings—
Ah! that they might be for him.

O, that like the flower he tramples,
Bending from his golden tread,
Full of fair celestial ardours,
She would bow her bridal head.

O, that like the flower she presses,
Nodding from her lily touch,
Light as in the harmless breezes,
She would know the god for such!

See! the golden arms are round her—
To the air she grasps and clings!
See! his glowing arms have wound her—
To the sky she shrieks and springs!

See! the flushing chase of Tempe
Trembles with Olympian air—
See! green sprigs and buds are shooting
From those white raised arms of prayer!

In the earth her feet are rooting!—
Breasts and limbs and lifted eyes,
Hair and lips and stretching fingers,
Fade away—and fadeless rise.

And the god whose fervent rapture
Clasps her, finds his close embrace
Full of palpitating branches,
And new leaves that bud apace,

Round his wonder-stricken forehead ;—
While in ebbing measures slow,
Sounds of softly dying pulses,
Pause and quiver, pause and go.

Go, and come again, and flutter
On the verge of life,—then flee !
All the white ambrosial beauty
Is a lustrous Laurel Tree !

Still with the great panting love-chase
All its running sap is warmed ;—
But from head to foot the virgin
Is transfigured and transformed.

Changed !—yet the green Dryad nature
Is instinct with human ties,
And above its anguish'd lover
Breathes pathetic sympathies.

Sympathies of love and sorrow ;—
Joy in her divine escape !
Breathing through her bursting foliage
Comfort to his bending shape.

Vainly now the floating Naiads
Seek to pierce the laurel maze,
Nought but laurel meets their glances,
Laurel glistens as they gaze.

Nought but bright prophetic laurel !
Laurel over eyes and brows,
Over limbs and over bosom,
Laurel leaves and laurel boughs !

And in vain the listening Dryad
Shells her hand against her ear !—
All is silence—save the echo
Travelling in the distance drear.

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

LONDON BY LAMPLIGHT

There stands a singer in the street,
He has an audience motley and meet;
Above him lowers the London night,
And around the lamps are flaring bright.

His minstrelsy may be unchaste—
'Tis much unto that motley taste,
And loud the laughter he provokes
From those sad slaves of obscene jokes.

But woe is many a passer by
Who as he goes turns half an eye,
To see the human form divine
Thus Circe-wise changed into swine!

Make up the sum of either sex
That all our human hopes perplex,
With those unhappy shapes that know
The silent streets and pale cock-crow.

And can I trace in such dull eyes
Of fireside peace or country skies?
And could those haggard cheeks presume
To memories of a May-tide bloom?

Those violated forms have been
The pride of many a flowering green;
And still the virgin bosom heaves
With daisy meads and dewy leaves.

But stygian darkness reigns within,
The river of death from the founts of sin;
And one prophetic water rolls
Its gas-lit surface for their souls.

I will not hide the tragic sight—
Those drown'd black locks, those dead lips white,
Will rise from out the slimy flood,
And cry before God's throne for blood!

Those stiffened limbs, that swollen face,—
Pollution's last and best embrace,
Will call as such a picture can,
For retribution upon man.

Hark! how their feeble laughter rings,
While still the ballad-monger sings,
And flatters their unhappy breasts
With poisonous words and pungent jests.

O now would every daisy blush
To see them 'mid that earthy crush!
O dumb would be the evening thrush,
And hoary look the hawthorn bush!

The meadows of their infancy
Would shrink from them, and every tree,
And every little laughing spot,
Would hush itself and know them not.

Precursor to what black despairs
Was that child's face which once was theirs!
And O to what a world of guile
Was herald that young angel smile!

That face which to a father's eye
Was balm for all anxiety;
That smile which to a mother's heart
Went swifter than the swallow's dart!

O happy homes! that still they know
At intervals, with what a woe
Would ye look on them, dim and strange,
Suffering worse than winter change!

And yet could I transplant them there,
To breathe again the innocent air
Of youth, and once more reconcile
Their outcast looks with nature's smile;

Could I but give them one clear day
Of this delicious loving May,
Release their souls from anguish dark,
And stand them underneath the lark;—

I think that Nature would have power
To graft again her blighted flower
Upon the broken stem, renew
Some portion of its early hue:—

The heavy flood of tears unlock,
More precious than the Scriptured rock;
At least instil a happier mood,
And bring them back to womanhood.

Alas! how many lost ones claim
This refuge from despair and shame!
How many, longing for the light,
Sink deeper in the abyss this night!

O, crying sin! O, blushing thought!
Not only unto those that wrought
The misery and deadly blight;
But those that outcast them this night!

O, agony of grief! for who
Less dainty than his race, will do
Such battle for their human right,
As shall awake this startled night?

Proclaim this evil human page,
Will ever blot the Golden Age,
That poets dream and saints invite,
If it be unredeemed this night!

This night of deep solemnity,
And verdurous serenity,
While over every fleecy field,
The dews descend and odours yield.

This night of gleaming floods and falls,
Of forest glooms and sylvan calls,
Of starlight on the pebbly rills,
And twilight on the circling hills.

This night! when from the paths of men
Grey error steams as from a fen;
As o'er this flaring City wreathes
The black cloud-vapour that it breathes!

This night from which a morn will spring
Blooming on its orient wing;
A morn to roll with many more
Its ghostly foam on the twilight shore.

Morn! when the fate of all mankind
Hangs poised in doubt, and man is blind.
His duties of the day will seem
The fact of life, and mine the dream.

The destinies that bards have sung,
Regeneration to the young;
Reverberation of the truth,
And virtuous culture unto youth!

Youth! in whose season let abound
All flowers and fruits that strew the ground,
Voluptuous joy where love consents,
And health and pleasure pitch their tents:

All rapture and all pure delight;
A garden all unknown to blight,
But never the unnatural night
That throngs the shameless song this night!

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

SONG

Under boughs of breathing May,
In the mild spring-time I lay,
Lonely, for I had no love;
And the sweet birds all sang for pity,
Cuckoo, lark, and dove.

Tell me, cuckoo, then I cried,
Dare I woo and wed a bride?
I, like thee, have no home-nest;
And the twin notes thus tuned their ditty,—
'Love can answer best.'

Nor, warm dove with tender coo,
Have I thy soft voice to woo,
Even were a damsel by;
And the deep woodland crooned its ditty,—
'Love her first and try.'

Nor have I, wild lark, thy wing,
That from bluest heaven can bring
Bliss, whatever fate befall;
And the sky-lyrist trilled this ditty,—
'Love will give thee all.'

So it chanced while June was young,
Wooing well with fervent song,
I had won a damsel coy;
And the sweet birds that sang for pity,
Jubileed for joy.

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

PASTORALS

How sweet on sunny afternoons,
For those who journey light and well,
To loiter up a hilly rise
Which hides the prospect far beyond,
And fancy all the landscape lying
Beautiful and still.

Beneath a sky of summer blue,
Whose rounded cloudlets, folded soft,
Gaze on the scene which we await
And picture from their peacefulness;
So calmly to the earth inclining
Float those loving shapes!

Like airy brides, each singling out
A spot to love and bless with love,
Their creamy bosoms glowing warm,
Till distance weds them to the hills,
And with its latest gleam the river
Sinks in their embrace.

And silverly the river runs,
And many a graceful wind he makes,
By fields where feed the happy flocks,
And hedge-rows hushing pleasant lanes,
The charms of English home reflected
In his shining eye.

Ancestral oak, broad-foliaged elm,
Rich meadows sunned and starred with flowers,
The cottage breathing tender smoke
Against the brooding golden air,
With glimpses of a stately mansion
On a woodland sward.

And circling round as with a ring,
The distance spreading amber haze,
Enclosing hills and pastures sweet;
A depth of soft and mellow light
Which fills the heart with sudden yearning
Aimless and serene!

No disenchantment follows here,
For nature's inspiration moves
The dream which she herself fulfils;
And he whose heart like valley warmth,
Steams up with joy at scenes like this
Shall never be forlorn.

And O for any human soul
The rapture of a wide survey—
A valley sweeping to the West
With all its wealth of loveliness,
Is more than recompense for days
That taught us to endure.

Yon upland slope which hides the sun
Ascending from his eastern deeps,
And now against the hues of dawn,
One level line of tillage rears;
The furrowed brow of toil and time;
To many it is but a sweep of land!

To others 'tis an Autumn trust,
But unto me a mystery;—
An influence strange and swift as dreams;
A whispering of old romance;
A temple naked to the clouds;
Or one of nature's bosoms fresh revealed,

Heaving with adoration! there
The work of husbandry is done,
And daily bread is daily earned;

Nor seems there ought to indicate
The springs which move in me such thoughts,
But from my soul a spirit calls them up.

All day into the open sky,
All night to the eternal stars,
For ever both at morn and eve
When mellow distances draw near,
And shadows lengthen in the dusk,
Athwart the heavens it rolls its glimmering line!

When twilight from the dream-hued West
Sighs hush! and all the land is still;
When from the lush empurpling East,
The twilight of the crowing cock,
Peers on the drowsy village roofs,
Athwart the heavens that glimmering line is seen.

And now beneath the rising sun,
Whose shining chariot overpeers,
The irradiate ridge, while fetlock deep
In the rich soil his coursers plunge—
How grand in robes of light it looks!
How glorious with rare suggestive grace!

The ploughman mounting up the height
Becomes a glowing shape, as though
'Twere young Triptolemus, plough in hand,
While Ceres in her amber scarf,
With gentle love directs him how
To wed the willing earth and hope for fruits!

The furrows running up, are fraught
With meanings; there the goddess walks,
While Proserpine is young, and there—
'Mid the late autumn sheaves, her voice
Sobbing and choked with dumb despair—
The nights will hear her wailing for her child!

Whatever dim tradition tells,
Whatever history may reveal,
Or fancy, from her starry brows,
Of light or dreamful lustre shed,
Could not at this sweet time increase
The quiet consecration of the spot.

Blest with the sweat of labour, blest
With the young sun's first vigorous beams,
Village hope and harvest prayer,—
The heart that throbs beneath it, holds
A bliss so perfect in itself
Men's thoughts must borrow rather than bestow.

III

Now standing on this hedgeside path,
Up which the evening winds are blowing
Wildly from the lingering lines
Of sunset o'er the hills;
Unaided by one motive thought,
My spirit with a strange impulsion
Rises, like a fledgling,
Whose wings are not mature, but still
Supported by its strong desire,
Beats up its native air and leaves
The tender mother's nest.

Great music under heaven is made,
And in the track of rushing darkness
Comes the solemn shape of night,
And broods above the earth.
A thing of Nature am I now,
Abroad, without a sense or feeling
Born not of her bosom;
Content with all her truths and fates;
Ev'n as yon strip of grass that bows
Above the new-born violet bloom,
And sings with wood and field.

IV

Lo, as a tree, whose wintry twigs
Drink in the sun with fibrous joy,
And down into its dampest roots
Thrills quickened with the draught of life,
I wake unto the dawn, and leave my griefs to drowse.

I rise and drink the fresh sweet air:
Each draught a future bud of Spring;
Each glance of blue a birth of green;
I will not mimic yonder oak
That dallies with dead leaves ev'n while the primrose peeps.

But full of these warm-whispering beams,
Like Memnon in his mother's eye,—
Aurora! when the statue stone
Moaned soft to her pathetic touch,—
My soul shall own its parent in the founts of day!

And ever in the recurring light,
True to the primal joy of dawn,
Forget its barren griefs; and aye
Like aspens in the faintest breeze,
Turn all its silver sides and tremble into song.

V

Now from the meadow floods the wild duck clamours,
Now the wood pigeon wings a rapid flight,
Now the homeward rookery follows up its vanguard,
And the valley mists are curling up the hills.

Three short songs gives the clear-voiced throstle,
Sweetening the twilight ere he fills the nest;
While the little bird upon the leafless branches
Tweets to its mate a tiny loving note.

Deeper the stillness hangs on every motion;
Calmer the silence follows every call;
Now all is quiet save the roosting pheasant,
The bell-wether tinkle and the watch-dog's bark.

Softly shine the lights from the silent kindling homestead,
Stars of the hearth to the shepherd in the fold;
Springs of desire to the traveller on the roadway;
Ever breathing incense to the ever-blessing sky!

VI

How barren would this valley be,
Without the golden orb that gazes
On it, broadening to hues
Of rose, and spreading wings of amber;
Blessing it before it falls asleep.

How barren would this valley be,
Without the human lives now beating
In it, or the throbbing hearts
Far distant, who their flower of childhood
Cherish here, and water it with tears!

How barren should I be, were I
Without above that loving splendour,
Shedding light and warmth! without
Some kindred natures of my kind
To joy in me, or yearn towards me now!

VII

Summer glows warm on the meadows, and speedwell, and gold-cups, and daisies,
Darken 'mid deepening masses of sorrel, and shadowy grasses
Show the ripe hue to the farmer, and summon the scythe and the hay-makers
Down from the village; and now, even now, the air smells of the mowing,
And the sharp song of the scythe whistles daily; from dawn, till the gloaming
Wears its cool star; sweet and welcome to all flaming faces afield now;
Heavily weighs the hot season, and drowses the darkening foliage,
Drooping with languor; the white cloud floats, but sails not, for windless
Heaven's blue tents it; no lark singing up in its fleecy white valleys;

Up in its fairy white valleys, once feathered with minstrels; melodious
With the invisible joy that wakes dawn o'er the green fields of England.
Summer glows warm on the meadows; then come, let us roam thro' them gaily,
Heedless of heat, and the hot-kissing sun, and the fear of dark freckles.
Never one kiss will he give on a neck, or a lily-white forehead,
Chin, hand, or bosom uncovered, all panting, to take the chance coolness,—
But full sure the fiery pressure leaves seal of espousal.
Heed him not; come, tho' he kiss till the soft little upper-lip loses
Half its pure whiteness; just speck'd where the curve of the rosy mouth reddens.

Come, let him kiss, let him kiss, and his kisses shall make thee the sweeter.
Thou art no nun, veiled and vowed; doomed to nourish a withering pallor!
City exotics beside thee would show like bleached linen at mid-day,
Hung upon hedges of eglantine! Thou in the freedom of nature,
Full of her beauty and wisdom, gentleness, joyance, and kindness!
Come, and like bees will we gather the rich golden honey of noontide;
Deep in the sweet summer meadows, border'd by hillside and river;
Lined with long trenches half-hidden, where, smell of white meadow-sweet, sweetest
Blissfully hovers—O sweetest! but pluck it not! even in the tenderest
Grasp it will lose breath and wither; like many, not made for a posy.

See, the sun slopes down to the meadows, where all the flowers are falling!
Falling unhymned; for the nightingale scarce ever charms the long twilight:
Mute with the cares of the nest; only known by a 'chuck, chuck,' and dovelike
Call of content, but the finch and the linnet and blackcap pipe loudly.
Round on the western hill-side warbles the rich-billed ouzel;
And the shrill throstle is filling the tangled thickening copses;
Singing o'er hyacinths hid, and most honey'd of flowers, white field-rose.
Joy thus to revel all day in the grass of our own beloved country;
Revel all day, till the lark mounts at eve with his sweet 'tirra-lirra':
Trilling delightfully. See, on the river the slow-rippled surface
Shining; the slow ripple broadens in circles; the bright surface smoothens;

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

Now it is flat as the leaves of the yet unseen water-lily.
There dart the lives of a day, ever-varying tactics fantastic.
There, by the wet-mirrored osiers, the emerald wing of the kingfisher
Flashes, the fish in his beak! there the dab-chick dived, and the motion
Lazily undulates all thro' the tall standing army of rushes.

Joy thus to revel all day, till the twilight turns us homeward!
Till all the lingering deep-blooming splendour of sunset is over,
And the one star shines mildly in mellowing hues, like a spirit
Sent to assure us that light never dieth, tho' day is now buried.
Saying: to-morrow, to-morrow, few hours intervening, that interval
Tuned by the woodlark in heaven, to-morrow my semblance, far eastward,
Heralds the day 'tis my mission eternal to seal and to prophecy.

Come then, and homeward; passing down the close path of the meadows.
Home-like the bees stored with sweetness; each with a lark in the bosom,
Trilling for ever, and oh! will yon lark ever cease to sing up there?

SONG

Spring

When buds of palm do burst and spread
    Their downy feathers in the lane,
And orchard blossoms, white and red,
    Breathe Spring delight for Autumn gain;
    And the skylark shakes his wings in the rain;

O then is the season to look for a bride!
    Choose her warily, woo her unseen;
For the choicest maids are those that hide
    Like dewy violets under the green.

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

SONG

Autumn

When nuts behind the hazel-leaf
    Are brown as the squirrel that hunts them free,
And the fields are rich with the sun-burnt sheaf,
    'Mid the blue cornflower and the yellowing tree;
    And the farmer glows and beams in his glee;

O then is the season to wed thee a bride!
    Ere the garners are filled and the ale-cups foam;
For a smiling hostess is the pride
    And flower of every Harvest Home.

LOVE IN THE VALLEY

Under yonder beech-tree standing on the green-sward,
    Couched with her arms behind her little head,
Her knees folded up, and her tresses on her bosom,
    Lies my young love sleeping in the shade.
Had I the heart to slide one arm beneath her,
    Press her dreaming lips as her waist I folded slow,
Waking on the instant she could not but embrace me—
    Ah! would she hold me, and never let me go?

Shy as the squirrel, and wayward as the swallow;
    Swift as the swallow when athwart the western flood
Circleting the surface he meets his mirrored winglets,—
    Is that dear one in her maiden bud.
Shy as the squirrel whose nest is in the pine-tops;
    Gentle—ah! that she were jealous as the dove!
Full of all the wildness of the woodland creatures,
    Happy in herself is the maiden that I love!

What can have taught her distrust of all I tell her?
    Can she truly doubt me when looking on my brows?
Nature never teaches distrust of tender love-tales,
    What can have taught her distrust of all my vows?
No, she does not doubt me! on a dewy eve-tide
    Whispering together beneath the listening moon,
I pray'd till her cheek flush'd, implored till she faltered—
    Fluttered to my bosom—ah! to fly away so soon!

When her mother tends her before the laughing mirror,
    Tying up her laces, looping up her hair,
Often she thinks—were this wild thing wedded,
    I should have more love, and much less care.
When her mother tends her before the bashful mirror,
    Loosening her laces, combing down her curls,
Often she thinks—were this wild thing wedded,
    I should lose but one for so many boys and girls.

Clambering roses peep into her chamber,
    Jasmine and woodbine breathe sweet, sweet,
White-necked swallows twittering of summer,
    Fill her with balm and nested peace from head to feet.
Ah! will the rose-bough see her lying lonely,
    When the petals fall and fierce bloom is on the leaves?
Will the Autumn garners see her still ungathered,
    When the fickle swallows forsake the weeping eaves?

Comes a sudden question—should a strange hand pluck her!
    Oh! what an anguish smites me at the thought.
Should some idle lordling bribe her mind with jewels!—
    Can such beauty ever thus be bought?
Sometimes the huntsmen prancing down the valley
    Eye the village lasses, full of sprightly mirth;
They see as I see, mine is the fairest!
    Would she were older and could read my worth!

Are there not sweet maidens if she still deny me?
    Show the bridal heavens but one bright star?
Wherefore thus then do I chase a shadow,
    Clattering one note like a brown eve-jar?
So I rhyme and reason till she darts before me—
    Thro' the milky meadows from flower to flower she flies,
Sunning her sweet palms to shade her dazzled eyelids
    From the golden love that looks too eager in her eyes.

When at dawn she wakens, and her fair face gazes
    Out on the weather thro' the window-panes,
Beauteous she looks! like a white water-lily
    Bursting out of bud on the rippled river plains.
When from bed she rises clothed from neck to ankle
    In her long nightgown, sweet as boughs of May,
Beauteous she looks! like a tall garden lily
    Pure from the night and perfect for the day!

Happy, happy time, when the grey star twinkles
    Over the fields all fresh with bloomy dew;
When the cold-cheeked dawn grows ruddy up the twilight,
    And the gold sun wakes, and weds her in the blue.
Then when my darling tempts the early breezes,
    She the only star that dies not with the dark!
Powerless to speak all the ardour of my passion
    I catch her little hand as we listen to the lark.

Shall the birds in vain then valentine their sweethearts?
    Season after season tell a fruitless tale;
Will not the virgin listen to their voices?
    Take the honeyed meaning, wear the bridal veil.
Fears she frosts of winter, fears she the bare branches?
    Waits she the garlands of spring for her dower?
Is she a nightingale that will not be nested
    Till the April woodland has built her bridal bower?

Then come merry April with all thy birds and beauties!
With thy crescent brows and thy flowery, showery glee;
With thy budding leafage and fresh green pastures;
And may thy lustrous crescent grow a honeymoon for me!
Come merry month of the cuckoo and the violet!
Come weeping Loveliness in all thy blue delight!
Lo! the nest is ready, let me not languish longer!
Bring her to my arms on the first May night.

BEAUTY ROHTRAUT

(From Möricke)

What is the name of King Ringang's daughter?
Rohtraut, Beauty Rohtraut!
And what does she do the livelong day,
Since she dare not knit and spin alway?
O hunting and fishing is ever her play!
And, heigh! that her huntsman I might be!
I'd hunt and fish right merrily!
Be silent, heart!

And it chanced that, after this some time,
Rohtraut, Beauty Rohtraut,
The boy in the Castle has gained access,
And a horse he has got and a huntsman's dress,
To hunt and to fish with the merry Princess;
And, O! that a king's son I might be!
Beauty Rohtraut I love so tenderly.
Hush! hush! my heart.

Under a grey old oak they sat,
Beauty, Beauty Rohtraut!
She laughs: 'Why look you so slyly at me?
If you have heart enough, come, kiss me.'
Cried the breathless boy, 'kiss thee?'
But he thinks, kind fortune has favoured my youth;
And thrice he has kissed Beauty Rohtraut's mouth.
Down! down! mad heart.

Then slowly and silently they rode home,—
Rohtrant, Beauty Rohtrant!
The boy was lost in his delight:
'And, wert thou Empress this very night,
I would not heed or feel the blight;
Ye thousand leaves of the wild wood wist
How Beauty Rohtrant's mouth I kiss'd.
Hush! hush! wild heart.'

TO A SKYLARK

O skylark! I see thee and call thee joy!
Thy wings bear thee up to the breast of the dawn;
I see thee no more, but thy song is still
The tongue of the heavens to me!

Thus are the days when I was a boy;
Sweet while I lived in them, dear now they're gone:
I feel them no longer, but still, O still
They tell of the heavens to me.

SORROWS AND JOYS

Bury thy sorrows, and they shall rise
As souls to the immortal skies,
And there look down like mothers' eyes.

But let thy joys be fresh as flowers,
That suck the honey of the showers,
And bloom alike on huts and towers.

So shall thy days be sweet and bright;
Solemn and sweet thy starry night,
Conscious of love each change of light.

The stars will watch the flowers asleep,
The flowers will feel the soft stars weep,
And both will mix sensations deep.

With these below, with those above,
Sits evermore the brooding dove,
Uniting both in bonds of love.

For both by nature are akin;
Sorrow, the ashen fruit of sin,
And joy, the juice of life within.

Children of earth are these; and those
The spirits of divine repose—
Death radiant o'er all human woes.

O, think what then had been thy doom,
If homeless and without a tomb,
They had been left to haunt the gloom!

O, think again what now they are—
Motherly love, tho' dim and far,
Imaged in every lustrous star.

For they, in their salvation, know
No vestige of their former woe,
While thro' them all the heavens do flow.

Thus art thou wedded to the skies,
And watched by ever-loving eyes,
And warned by yearning sympathies.

SONG

The Flower unfolds its dawning cup,
And the young sun drinks the star-dews up,
At eve it droops with the bliss of day,
And dreams in the midnight far away.

So am I in thy sole, sweet glance,
Pressed with a weight of utterance;
Lovingly all my leaves unfold,
And gleam to the beams of thirsty gold.

At eve I droop, for then the swell
Of feeling falters forth farewell;—
At midnight I am dreaming deep,
Of what has been, in blissful sleep.

When—ah! when will love's own light
Wed me alike thro' day and night,
When will the stars with their linking charms
Wake us in each other's arms?

SONG

Thou to me art such a spring,
As the Arab seeks at eve,
Thirsty from the shining sands;
There to bathe his face and hands,
While the sun is taking leave,
And dewy sleep is a delicious thing.

Thou to me art such a dream,
As he dreams upon the grass,
While the bubbling coolness near,
Makes sweet music in his ear;
And the stars that slowly pass,
In solitary grandeur o'er him gleam.

Thou to me art such a dawn,
As the dawn, whose ruddy kiss
Wakes him to his darling steed;
And again the desert speed,
And again the desert bliss,
Lightens thro' his veins, and he is gone!

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

ANTIGONE

The buried voice bespake Antigone.

'O Sister! couldst thou know as thou wilt know,
The bliss above, the reverence below,
Enkindled by thy sacrifice for me;
Thou wouldst at once with holy ecstasy,
Give thy warm limbs into the yearning earth.
Sleep, Sister! for Elysium's dawning birth,—
And faith will fill thee with what is to be!
Sleep, for the Gods are watching over thee!
Thy dream will steer thee to perform their will,
As silently their influence they instil.
O Sister! in the sweetness of thy prime,
Thy hand has plucked the bitter flower of death;
But this will dower thee with Elysian breath,
That fade into a never-fading clime.
Dear to the Gods are those that do like thee
A solemn duty! for the tyranny
Of kings is feeble to the soul that dares
Defy them to fulfil its sacred cares:
And weak against a mighty will are men.
O, Torch between two brothers! in whose gleam
Our slaughtered House doth shine as one again,
Tho' severed by the sword; now may thy dream
Kindle desire in thee for us, and thou,
Forgetting not thy lover and his vow,
Leaving no human memory forgot,
Shalt cross, not unattended, the dark stream
Which runs by thee in sleep and ripples not.
The large stars glitter thro' the anxious night,
And the deep sky broods low to look at thee:
The air is hush'd and dark o'er land and sea,
And all is waiting for the morrow light:
So do thy kindred spirits wait for thee.
O Sister! soft as on the downward rill,

Will those first daybeams from the distant hill
Fall on the smoothness of thy placid brow,
Like this calm sweetness breathing thro' me now:
And when the fated sounds shall wake thine eyes,
Wilt thou, confiding in the supreme will,
In all thy maiden steadfastness arise,
Firm to obey and earnest to fulfil;
Remembering the night thou didst not sleep,
And this same brooding sky beheld thee creep,
Defiant of unnatural decree,
To where I lay upon the outcast land;
Before the iron gates upon the plain;
A wretched, graveless ghost, whose wailing chill,
Came to thy darkened door imploring thee;
Yearning for burial like my brother slain;—
And all was dared for love and piety!
This thought will nerve again thy virgin hand
To serve its purpose and its destiny.'

She woke, they led her forth, and all was still.

Swathed round in mist and crown'd with cloud,
O Mountain! hid from peak to base—
Caught up into the heavens and clasped
In white ethereal arms that make
Thy mystery of size sublime!
What eye or thought can measure now
Thy grand dilating loftiness!
What giant crest dispute with thee
Supremacy of air and sky!
What fabled height with thee compare!
Not those vine-terraced hills that seethe
The lava in their fiery cusps;
Nor that high-climbing robe of snow,
Whose summits touch the morning star,
And breathe the thinnest air of life;
Nor crocus-couching Ida, warm

With Juno's latest nuptial lure;
Nor Tenedos whose dreamy eye
Still looks upon beleaguered Troy;
Nor yet Olympus crown'd with gods,
Can boast a majesty like thine,
O Mountain! hid from peak to base,
And image of the awful power
With which the secret of all things
That stoops from heaven to garment earth,
Can speak to any human soul,
When once the earthly limits lose
Their pointed heights and sharpened lines,
And measureless immensity
Is palpable to sense and sight.

SONG

No, no, the falling blossom is no sign
Of loveliness destroy'd and sorrow mute;
The blossom sheds its loveliness divine;—
Its mission is to prophecy the fruit.

Nor is the day of love for ever dead,
When young enchantment and romance are gone;
The veil is drawn, but all the future dread
Is lightened by the finger of the dawn.

Love moves with life along a darker way,
They cast a shadow and they call it death:
But rich is the fulfilment of their day;
The purer passion and the firmer faith.

THE TWO BLACKBIRDS

A Blackbird in a wicker cage,
That hung and swung 'mid fruits and flowers,
Had learnt the song-charm, to assuage
The dreariness of its wingless hours.

And ever when the song was heard,
From trees that shade the grassy plot
Warbled another glossy bird,
Whose mate not long ago was shot.

Strange anguish in that creature's breast,
Unwept like human grief, unsaid,
Has quickened in its lonely nest
A living impulse from the dead.

Not to console its own wild smart,—
But with a kindling instinct strong,
The novel feeling of its heart
Beats for the captive bird of song.

And when those mellow notes are still,
It hops from off its choral perch,
O'er path and sward, with busy bill,
All grateful gifts to peck and search.

Store of ouzel dainties choice
To those white swinging bars it brings;
And with a low consoling voice,
It talks between its fluttering wings.

Deeply in their bitter grief
Those sufferers reciprocate,
The one sings for its woodland life,
The other for its murdered mate.

But deeper doth the secret prove,
Uniting those sad creatures so;
Humanity's great link of love,
The common sympathy of woe.

Well divined from day to day,
Is the swift speech between them twain;
For when the bird is scared away,
The captive bursts to song again.

Yet daily with its flattering voice,
    Talking amid its fluttering wings,
Store of ouzel dainties choice,
    With busy bill the poor bird brings.

And shall I say, till weak with age,
    Down from its drowsy branch it drops,
It will not leave that captive cage,
    Nor cease those busy searching hops?

Ah, no! the moral will not strain;
    Another sense will make it range,
Another mate will soothe its pain,
    Another season work a change.

But thro' the live-long summer, tried,
    A pure devotion we may see;
The ebb and flow of Nature's tide;
    A self-forgetful sympathy.

JULY

I

Blue July, bright July,
    Month of storms and gorgeous blue;
Violet lightnings o'er thy sky,
    Heavy falls of drenching dew;
Summer crown! o'er glen and glade
Shrinking hyacinths in their shade;
I welcome thee with all thy pride,
I love thee like an Eastern bride.
    Though all the singing days are done
    As in those climes that clasp the sun;
    Though the cuckoo in his throat,
    Leaves to the dove his last twin note;
Come to me with thy lustrous eye,
Golden-dawning oriently,

Come with all thy shining blooms,
Thy rich red rose and rolling glooms.
Though the cuckoo doth but sing 'cuk, cuk,'
And the dove alone doth coo;
Though the cushat spins her coo-r-roo, r-r-roo—
To the cuckoo's halting 'cuk.'

II

Sweet July, warm July!
Month when mosses near the stream,
Soft green mosses thick and shy,
Are a rapture and a dream.
Summer Queen! whose foot the fern
Fades beneath while chesnuts burn;
I welcome thee with thy fierce love,
Gloom below and gleam above.
Though all the forest trees hang dumb,
With dense leafiness o'ercome;
Though the nightingale and thrush,
Pipe not from the bough or bush;
Come to me with thy lustrous eye,
Azure-melting westerly,
The raptures of thy face unfold,
And welcome in thy robes of gold!
Though the nightingale broods—'sweet-chuck-sweet'—
And the ouzel flutes so chill,
Tho' the throstle gives but one shrilly trill
To the nightingale's 'sweet-sweet.'

SONG

I would I were the drop of rain
That falls into the dancing rill,
For I should seek the river then,
And roll below the wooded hill,
Until I reached the sea.

And O, to be the river swift
That wrestles with the wilful tide,
And fling the briny weeds aside
That o'er the foamy billows drift,
Until I came to thee!

I would that after weary strife,
And storm beneath the piping wind,
The current of my true fresh life,
Might come unmingled, unimbrined,
To where thou floatest free.

Might find thee in some amber clime,
Where sunlight dazzles on the sail,
And dreaming of our plighted vale,
Might seal the dream, and bless the time,
With maiden kisses three.

SONG

Come to me in any shape!
As a victor crown'd with vine,
In thy curls the clustering grape,—
Or a vanquished slave:
'Tis thy coming that I crave,
And thy folding serpent twine,
Close and dumb;
Ne'er from that would I escape;
Come to me in any shape!
Only come!

Only come, and in my breast
Hide thy shame or show thy pride;
In my bosom be caressed,
Never more to part;
Come into my yearning heart;
I, the serpent, golden-eyed,

Twine round thee;
Twine thee with no venomed test,
Absence makes the venomed nest;
Come to me!

Come to me, my lover, come!
Violets on the tender stem
Die and wither in their bloom,
Under dewy grass;
Come, my lover, or, alas!
I shall die, shall die like them,
Frail and lone;
Come to me, my lover, come!
Let thy bosom be my tomb:
Come, my own!

THE SHIPWRECK OF IDOMENEUS

Swept from his fleet upon that fatal night
When great Poseidon's sudden-veering wrath
Scattered the happy homeward-floating Greeks
Like foam-flakes off the waves, the King of Crete
Held lofty commune with the dark Sea-god.
His brows were crowned with victory, his cheeks
Were flushed with triumph, but the mighty joy
Of Troy's destruction and his own great deeds
Passed, for the thoughts of home were dearer now,
And sweet the memory of wife and child,
And weary now the ten long, foreign years,
And terrible the doubt of short delay—
More terrible, O Gods! he cried, but stopped;
Then raised his voice upon the storm and prayed.
O thou, if injured, injured not by me,
Poseidon! whom sea-deities obey
And mortals worship, hear me! for indeed
It was our oath to aid the cause of Greece,

Not unespoused by gods, and most of all
By thee, if gentle currents, havens calm,
Fair winds and prosperous voyage, and the Shape
Impersonate in many a perilous hour,
Both in the stately councils of the Kings,
And when the husky battle murmured thick,
May testify of services performed!
But now the seas are haggard with thy wrath,
Thy breath is tempest! never at the shores
Of hostile Ilium did thy stormful brows
Betray such fierce magnificence! not even
On that wild day when mad with torch and glare,
The frantic crowds with eyes like starving wolves,
Burst from their ports impregnable, a stream
Of headlong fury toward the hissing deep;
Where then full-armed I stood in guard, compact
Beside thee, and alone, with brand and spear,
We held at bay the swarming brood, and poured
Blood of choice warriors on the foot-ploughed sands!
Thou, meantime, dark with conflict, as a cloud
That thickens in the bosom of the West
Over quenched sunset, circled round with flame.
Huge as a billow running from the winds
Long distances, till with black shipwreck swoln,
It flings its angry mane about the sky.
And like that billow heaving ere it burst;
And like that cloud urged by impulsive storm
With charge of thunder, lightning, and the drench
Of torrents, thou in all thy majesty
Of mightiness didst fall upon the war!
Remember that great moment! Nor forget
The aid I gave thee; how my ready spear
Flew swiftly seconding thy mortal stroke,
Where'er the press was hottest; never slacked
My arm its duty, nor mine eye its aim,
Though terribly they compassed us, and stood
Thick as an Autumn forest, whose brown hair,
Lustrous with sunlight, by the still increase
Of heat to glowing heat conceives like zeal

Of radiance, till at the pitch of noon
'Tis seised with conflagration and distends
Horridly over leagues of doom'd domain.
Mingling the screams of birds, the cries of brutes,
The wail of creatures in the covert pent,
Howls, yells, and shrieks of agony, the hiss
Of seething sap, and crash of falling boughs
Together in its dull voracious roar.
So closely and so fearfully they throng'd,
Savage with phantasies of victory,
A sea of dusky shapes; for day had passed
And night fell on their darkened faces, red
With fight and torchflare; shrill the resonant air
With eager shouts, and hoarse with angry groans;
While over all the dense and sullen boom,
The din and murmur of the myriads,
Rolled with its awful intervals, as though
The battle breathed, or as against the shore
Waves gather back to heave themselves anew.
That night sleep dropped not from the dreary skies,
Nor could the prowess of our chiefs oppose
That sea of raging men. But what were they?
Or what is man opposed to thee? His hopes
Are wrecks, himself the drowning, drifting weed
That wanders on thy waters; such as I
Who see the scattered remnants of my fleet,
Remembering the day when first he sailed,
Each glad ship shining like the morning star
With promise for the world. Oh! such as I
Thus darkly drifting on the drowning waves.
O God of waters! 'tis a dreadful thing
To suffer for an evil unrevealed;
Dreadful it is to hear the perishing cry
Of those we love; the silence that succeeds
How dreadful! Still my trust is fixed on thee
For those that still remain and for myself.
And if I hear thy swift foam-snorting steeds
Drawing thy dusky chariot, as in
The pauses of the wind I seem to hear,

Deaf thou art not to my entreating prayer!
Haste then to give us help, for closely now
Crete whispers in my ears, and all my blood
Runs keen and warm for home, and I have yearning,
Such yearning as I never felt before,
To see again my wife, my little son,
My Queen, my pretty nursling of five years,
The darling of my hopes, our dearest pledge
Of marriage, and our brightest prize of love,
Whose parting cry rings clearest in my heart.
O lay this horror, much-offended God!
And making all as fair and firm as when
We trusted to thy mighty depths of old,—
I vow to sacrifice the first whom Zeus
Shall prompt to hail us from the white seashore
And welcome our return to royal Crete,
An offering, Poseidon, unto thee!

Amid the din of elemental strife,
No voice may pierce but Deity supreme:
And Deity supreme alone can hear,
Above the hurricane's discordant shrieks,
The cry of agonized humanity.

Not unappeased was He who smites the waves,
When to his stormy ears the warrior's vow
Entered, and from his foamy pinnacle
Tumultuous, he beheld the prostrate form,
And knew the mighty heart. Awhile he gazed,
As doubtful of his purpose, and the storm,
Conscious of that divine debate, withheld
Its fierce emotion, in the luminous gloom
Of those so dark irradiating eyes!
Beneath whose wavering lustre shone revealed
The tumult of the purpling deeps, and all
The throbbing of the tempest, as it paused,
Slowly subsiding, seeming to await
The sudden signal, as a faithful hound
Pants with the forepaws stretched before its nose,

Athwart the greensward, after an eager chase;
Its hot tongue thrust to cool, its foamy jaws
Open to let the swift breath come and go,
Its quick interrogating eyes fixed keen
Upon the huntsman's countenance, and ever
Lashing its sharp impatient tail with haste:
Prompt at the slightest sign to scour away,
And hang itself afresh by the bleeding fangs,
Upon the neck of some death-singled stag,
Whose royal antlers, eyes, and stumbling knees,
Will supplicate the gods in mute despair.
This time not mute, nor yet in vain this time!
For still the burden of the earnest voice
And all the vivid glories it revoked,
Sank in the god, with that absorbed suspense
Felt only by the Olympians, whose minds
Unbounded like our mortal brain, perceive
All things complete, the end, the aim of all;
To whom the crown and consequence of deeds
Are ever present with the deed itself.

And now the pouring surges, vast and smooth,
Grew weary of restraint, and heaved themselves
Headlong beneath him, breaking at his feet
With wild importunate cries and angry wail;
Like crowds that shout for bread and hunger more.
And now the surface of their rolling backs
Was ridged with foam-topt furrows, rising high
And dashing wildly, like to fiery steeds,
Fresh from the Thracian or Thessalian plains,
High-blooded mares just tempering to the bit,
Whose manes at full-speed stream upon the winds,
And in whose delicate nostrils when the gust
Breathes of their native plains, they ramp and rear,
Frothing the curb, and bounding from the earth,
As though the Sun-god's chariot alone
Were fit to follow in their flashing track.
Anon with gathering stature to the height
Of those colossal giants, doomed long since

To torturous grief and penance, that assailed
The sky-throned courts of Zeus, and climbing, dared
For once in a world the Olympic wrath, and braved
The electric spirit which from his clenching hand
Pierces the dark-veined earth, and with a touch
Is death to mortals, fearfully they grew!
And with like purpose of audacity,
Threatened Titanic fury to the god.
Such was the agitation of the sea
Beneath Poseidon's thought-revolving brows,
Storming for signal. But no signal came.
And as when men who congregate to hear
Some proclamation from the regal fount
With eager questioning and anxious phrase,
Betray the expectation of their hearts,
Till after many hours of fretful sloth,
Weary with much delay, they hold discourse
In sullen groups and cloudy masses, stirred
With rage irresolute and whispering plot,
Known more by indication than by word,
And understood alone by those whose minds
Participate;—even so the restless waves
Began to lose all sense of servitude,
And worked with rebel passions, bursting, now
To right, and now to left, but evermore
Subdued with influence, and controlled with dread
Of that inviolate Authority.

Then, swiftly as he mused, the impetuous God
Seized on the pausing reins, his coursers plunged,
His brows resumed the grandeur of their ire;
Throughout his vast divinity the deeps
Concurrent thrilled with action, and away,
As sweeps a thunder-cloud across the sky
In harvest-time, preluded by dull blasts;
Or some black-visaged whirlwind, whose wide folds
Rush, wrestling on with all 'twixt heaven and earth,
Darkling he hurried, and his distant voice,
Not softened by delay, was heard in tones

Distinctly terrible, still following up
Its rapid utterance of tremendous wrath
With hoarse reverberations; like the roar
Of lions when they hunger, and awake
The sullen echoes from their forest sleep,
To speed the ravenous noise from hill to hill
And startle victims; but more awful, He,
Scudding across the hills that rise and sink,
With foam, and splash, and cataracts of spray,
Clothed in majestic splendour; girt about
With sea-gods and swift creatures of the sea;
Their briny eyes blind with the showering drops;
Their stormy locks, salt tongues, and scaly backs,
Quivering in harmony with the tempest, fierce
And eager with tempestuous delight;—
He like a moving rock above them all
Solemnly towering while fitful gleams
Brake from his dense black forehead, which display'd
The enduring chiefs as their distracted fleets,
Tossed, toiling with the waters, climbing high,
And plunging downward with determined beaks,
In lurid anguish; but the Cretan king
And all his crew were 'ware of under-tides,
That for the groaning vessel made a path,
On which the impending and precipitous waves
Fell not, nor suck'd to their abysmal gorge.

O, happy they to feel the mighty God,
Without his whelming presence near: to feel
Safety and sweet relief from such despair,
And gushing of their weary hopes once more
Within their fond warm hearts, tired limbs, and eyes
Heavy with much fatigue and want of sleep!
Prayers did not lack; like mountain springs they came,
After the earth has drunk the drenching rains,
And throws her fresh-born jets into the sun
With joyous sparkles;—for there needed not
Evidence more serene of instant grace,
Immortal mercy! and the sense which follows

Divine interposition, when the shock
Of danger hath been thwarted by the Gods,
Visibly, and through supplication deep,—
Rose in them, chiefly in the royal mind
Of him whose interceding vow had saved.
Tears from that great heroic soul sprang up;
Not painful as in grief, nor smarting keen
With shame of weeping; but calm, fresh, and sweet;
Such as in lofty spirits rise, and wed
The nature of the woman to the man;
A sight most lovely to the Gods! They fell
Like showers of starlight from his stedfast eyes,
As ever towards the prow he gazed, nor moved
One muscle, with firm lips and level lids,
Motionless; while the winds sang in his ears,
And took the length of his brown hair in streams
Behind him. Thus the hours passed, and the oars
Plied without pause, and nothing but the sound
Of the dull rowlocks and still watery sough,
Far off, the carnage of the storm, was heard.
For nothing spake the mariners in their toil,
And all the captains of the war were dumb;
Too much oppressed with wonder, too much thrilled
By their great chieftain's silence, to disturb
Such meditation with poor human speech.
Meantime the moon through slips of driving cloud
Came forth, and glanced athwart the seas a path
Of dusky splendour, like the Hadean brows,
When with Elysian passion they behold
Persephone's complacent hueless cheeks.
Soon gathering strength and lustre, as a ship
That swims into some blue and open bay
With bright full-bosomed sails, the radiant car
Of Artemis advanced, and on the waves
Sparkled like arrows from her silver bow,
The keenness of her pure and tender gaze.

Then, slowly, one by one the chiefs sought rest;
The watches being set, and men to relieve

The rowers at midseason. Fair it was
To see them as they lay! Some up the prow,
Some round the helm, in open-handed sleep;
With casques unloosed, and bucklers put aside;
The ten years' tale of war upon their cheeks,
Where clung the salt wet locks, and on their breasts
Beards, the thick growth of many a proud campaign;
And on their brows the bright invisible crown
Victory sheds from her own radiant form,
As o'er her favourites' heads she sings and soars.
But dreams came not so calmly, as around
Turbulent shores wild waves and swamping surf
Prevail, while seaward, on the tranquil deeps,
Reign placid surfaces and solemn peace,
So from the troubled strands of memory, they
Launched and were tossed, long ere they found the tides
That lead to the gentle bosoms of pure rest.
And like to one who from a ghostly watch
In a lone house where murder hath been done,
And secret violations, pale with stealth
Emerges, staggering on the first chill gust
Wherewith the morning greets him, feeling not
Its balmy freshness on his bloodless cheek,—
But swift to hide his midnight face afar,
'Mongst the old woods and timid-glancing flowers
Hastens, till on the fresh reviving breasts
Of tender Dryads folded, he forgets
The pallid witness of those nameless things,
In renovated senses lapt, and joins
The full, keen joyance of the day, so they
From sights and sounds of battle smeared with blood,
And shrieking souls on Acheron's bleak tides,
And wail of execrating kindred, slid
Into oblivious slumber and a sense
Of satiate deliciousness complete.

Leave them, O Muse, in that so happy sleep!
Leave them to reap the harvest of their toil,
While fast in moonlight the glad vessel glides,

As if instinctive to its forest home.
O Muse, that in all sorrows and all joys,
Rapturous bliss and suffering divine,
Dwellest with equal fervour, in the calm
Of thy serene philosophy, albeit
Thy gentle nature is of joy alone,
And loves the pipings of the happy fields,
Better than all the great parade and pomp,
Which forms the train of heroes and of kings,
And sows, too frequently, the tragic seeds
That choke with sobs thy singing,—turn away
Thy lustrous eyes back to the oath-bound man!
For as a shepherd stands above his flock,
The lofty figure of the king is seen,
Standing above his warriors as they sleep:
And still as from a rock grey waters gush,
While still the rock is passionless and dark,
Nor moves one feature of its giant face,
The tears fall from his eyes, and he stirs not.

And O, bright Muse! forget not thou to fold
In thy prophetic sympathy, the thought
Of him whose destiny has heard its doom:
The Sacrifice thro' whom the ship is saved.
Haply that Sacrifice is sleeping now,
And dreams of glad to-morrows. Haply now,
His hopes are keenest, and his fervent blood
Richest with youth, and love, and fond regard!
Round him the circle of affections blooms,
And in some happy nest of home he lives,
One name oft uttering in delighted ears,
Mother! at which the heart of men are kin
With reverence and yearning. Haply, too,
That other name, twin holy, twin revered,
He whispers often to the passing winds
That blow toward the Asiatic coasts;
For Crete has sent her bravest to the war,
And multitudes pressed forward to that rank,
Men with sad weeping wives and little ones.

That other name—O Father! who art thou,
Thus doomed to lose the star of thy last days?
It may be the sole flower of thy life,
And that of all who now look up to thee!
Oh! Father, Father! unto thee even now
Fate cries; the future with imploring voice,
Cries 'Save me,' 'Save me,' though thou hearest not,
And Oh! thou Sacrifice, foredoomed by Zeus.
Even now the dark inexorable deed
Is dealing its relentless stroke, and vain
Are prayers, and tears, and struggles, and despair!
The mother's tears, the nation's stormful grief,
The people's indignation and revenge!
Vain the last childlike pleading voice for life,
The quick resolve, the young heroic brow,
So like, so like, and vainly beautiful!
Oh! whosoe'er ye are the Muse says not,
And sees not, but the gods look down on both.

THE LONGEST DAY

On yonder hills soft twilight dwells
    And Hesper burns where sunset dies,
Moist and chill the woodland smells
    From the fern-covered hollows uprise;
    Darkness drops not from the skies,
But shadows of darkness are flung o'er the vale
    From the boughs of the chesnut, the oak, and the elm,
While night in yon lines of eastern pines
    Preserves alone her inviolate realm
        Against the twilight pale.

Say, then say, what is this day,
    That it lingers thus with half-closed eyes,
When the sunset is quenched and the orient ray
    Of the roseate moon doth rise,
    Like a midnight sun o'er the skies!

'Tis the longest, the longest of all the glad year,
The longest in life and the fairest in hue,
When day and night, in bridal light,
Mingle their beings beneath the sweet blue,
And bless the balmy air!

Upward to this starry height
The culminating seasons rolled;
On one slope green with spring delight,
The other with harvest gold,
And treasures of Autumn untold:
And on this highest throne of the midsummer now
The waning but deathless day doth dream,
With a rapturous grace, as tho' from the face
Of the unveiled infinity, lo, a far beam
Had fall'n on her dim-flushed brow!

Prolong, prolong that tide of song
O leafy nightingale and thrush!
Still earnest-throated blackcap throng
The woods with that emulous gush
Of notes in tumultuous rush.
Ye summer souls raise up one voice!
A charm is afloat all over the land;
The ripe year doth fall to the Spirit of all,
Who blesses it with outstretched hand,
Ye summer souls rejoice!

TO ROBIN REDBREAST

Merrily 'mid the faded leaves,
O Robin of the bright redbreast!
Cheerily over the Autumn eaves,
Thy note is heard, bonny bird;
Sent to cheer us, and kindly endear us
To what would be a sorrowful time

Without thee in the weltering clime:
Merry art thou in the boughs of the lime,
While thy fadeless waistcoat glows on thy breast,
In Autumn's reddest livery drest.

A merry song, a cheery song!
In the boughs above, on the sward below,
Chirping and singing the live day long,
While the maple in grief sheds its fiery leaf,
And all the trees waning, with bitter complaining,
Chesnut, and elm, and sycamore,
Catch the wild gust in their arms, and roar
Like the sea on a stormy shore,
Till wailfully they let it go,
And weep themselves naked and weary with woe.

Merrily, cheerily, joyously still
Pours out the crimson-crested tide.
The set of the season burns bright on the hill,
Where the foliage dead falls yellow and red,
Picturing vainly, but foretelling plainly
The wealth of cottage warmth that comes
When the frost gleams and the blood numbs,
And then, bonny Robin, I 'll spread thee out crumbs
In my garden porch for thy redbreast pride,
The song and the ensign of dear fireside.

SONG

The daisy now is out upon the green;
And in the grassy lanes
The child of April rains,
The sweet fresh-hearted violet is smelt and loved unseen.

Along the brooks and meads, the daffodil
Its yellow richness spreads,
And by the fountain-heads
Of rivers, cowslips cluster round, and over every hill.

The crocus and the primrose may have gone,
    The snowdrop may be low,
    But soon the purple glow
Of hyacinths will fill the copse, and lilies watch the dawn.

And in the sweetness of the budding year,
    The cuckoo's woodland call,
    The skylark over all,
And then at eve, the nightingale, is doubly sweet and dear.

My soul is singing with the happy birds,
    And all my human powers
    Are blooming with the flowers,
My foot is on the fields and downs, among the flocks and herds.

Deep in the forest where the foliage droops,
    I wander, fill'd with joy.
    Again as when a boy,
The sunny vistas tempt me on with dim delicious hopes.

The sunny vistas, dim with hurrying shade,
    And old romantic haze:—
    Again as in past days,
The spirit of immortal Spring doth every sense pervade.

Oh! do not say that this will ever cease;—
    This joy of woods and fields,
    This youth that nature yields,
Will never speak to me in vain, tho' soundly rapt in peace.

SUNRISE

The clouds are withdrawn
And their thin-rippled mist,
That stream'd o'er the lawn
To the drowsy-eyed west.
Cold and grey
They slept in the way,

And shrank from the ray
Of the chariot East:
But now they are gone
And the bounding light
Leaps thro' the bars
Of doubtful dawn;
Blinding the stars,
And blessing the sight;
Shedding delight
On all below;
Glimmering fields,
And wakening wealds,
And rising lark,
And meadows dark,
And idle rills,
And labouring mills,
And far-distant hills
Of the fawn and the doe.
The sun is cheered
And his path is cleared,
As he steps to the air
From his emerald cave,
His heel in the wave,
Most bright and bare;
In the tide of the sky
His radiant hair;
From his temples fair,
Blown back on high;
As forward he bends,
And upward ascends,
Timely and true,
To the breast of the blue;
His warm red lips
Kissing the dew,
Which sweetened drips
On his flower cupholders;
Every hue
From his gleaming shoulders
Shining anew

With colour sky-born,
As it washes and dips
In the pride of the morn.
Robes of azure,
Fringed with amber,
Fold upon fold
Of purple and gold,
Vine-leaf bloom,
And the grape's ripe gloom,
When season deep
In noontide leisure,
With clustering heap
The tendrils clamber,
Full in the face
Of his hot embrace,
Fill'd with the gleams
Of his firmest beams.
Autumn flushes,
Roseate blushes,
Vermeil tinges,
Violet fringes,
Every hue
Of his flower cupholders,
O'er the clear ether
Mingled together,
Shining anew
From his gleaming shoulders!
Circling about
In a coronal rout,
And floating behind,
The way of the wind,
As forward he bends,
And upward ascends,
Timely and true,
To the breast of the blue.
His bright neck curved,
His clear limbs nerved,
Diamond keen
On his front serene,

While each white arm strains
To the racing reins,
As plunging, eyes flashing,
Dripping, and dashing,
His steeds triple grown,
Rear up to his throne,
Ruffling the rest
Of the sea's blue breast,
From his flooding, flaming crimson crest!

PICTURES OF THE RHINE

I

The spirit of Romance dies not to those
Who hold a kindred spirit in their souls:
Even as the odorous life within the rose
Lives in the scattered leaflets and controls
Mysterious adoration, so there glows
Above dead things a thing that cannot die;
Faint as the glimmer of a tearful eye,
Ere the orb fills and all the sorrow flows.
Beauty renews itself in many ways;
The flower is fading while the new bud blows;
And this dear land as true a symbol shows,
While o'er it like a mellow sunset strays
The legendary splendour of old days,
Invisible, inviolate repose.

II

About a mile behind the viny banks,
How sweet it was, upon a sloping green,
Sunspread, and shaded with a branching screen,
To lie in peace half-murmuring words of thanks!
To see the mountains on each other climb,
With spaces for rich meadows flowery bright;
The winding river freshening the sight
At intervals, the trees in leafy prime;

The distant village-roofs of blue and white,
With intersections of quaint-fashioned beams
All slanting crosswise, and the feudal gleams
Of ruined turrets, barren in the light;—
To watch the changing clouds, like clime in clime,
Oh! sweet to lie and bless the luxury of time.

III

Fresh blows the early breeze, our sail is full;
A merry morning and a mighty tide.
Cheerily O! and past St. Goar we glide,
Half hid in misty dawn and mountain cool.
The river is our own! and now the sun
In saffron clothes the warming atmosphere;
The sky lifts up her white veil like a nun,
And looks upon the landscape blue and clear;—
The lark is up; the hills, the vines in sight;
The river broadens with his waking bliss
And throws up islands to behold the light;
Voices begin to rise, all hues to kiss;—
Was ever such a happy morn as this!
Birds sing, we shout, flowers breathe, trees shine with one delight!

IV

Between the two white breasts of her we love,
A dewy blushing rose will sometimes spring;
Thus Nonnenwerth like an enchanted thing
Rises mid-stream the crystal depths above.
On either side the waters heave and swell,
But all is calm within the little Isle;
Content it is to give its holy smile,
And bless with peace the lives that in it dwell.
Most dear on the dark grass beneath its bower
Of kindred trees embracing branch and bough,
To dream of fairy foot and sudden flower;
Or haply with a twilight on the brow,
To muse upon the legendary hour,
And Roland's lonely love and Hildegard's sad vow.

V

Hark! how the bitter winter breezes blow
Round the sharp rocks and o'er the half-lifted wave,
While all the rocky woodland branches rave
Shrill with the piercing cold, and every cave,
Along the icy water-margin low,
Rings bubbling with the whirling overflow;
And sharp the echoes answer distant cries
Of dawning daylight and the dim sunrise,
And the gloom-coloured clouds that stain the skies
With pictures of a warmth, and frozen glow
Spread over endless fields of sheeted snow;
And white untrodden mountains shining cold,
And muffled footpaths winding thro' the wold,
O'er which those wintry gusts cease not to howl and blow.

VI

Rare is the loveliness of slow decay!
With youth and beauty all must be desired,
But 'tis the charm of things long past away,
They leave, alone, the light they have inspired:
The calmness of a picture; Memory now
Is the sole life among the ruins grey,
And like a phantom in fantastic play,
She wanders with rank weeds stuck on her brow,
Over grass-hidden caves and turret-tops,
Herself almost as tottering as they;
While, to the steps of Time, her latest props
Fall stone by stone, and in the Sun's hot ray
All that remains stands up in rugged pride,
And bridal vines drink in his juices on each side.

TO A NIGHTINGALE

O nightingale! how hast thou learnt
The note of the nested dove?
While under thy bower the fern hangs burnt
And no cloud hovers above!

Rich July has many a sky
With splendour dim, that thou mightst hymn,
And make rejoice with thy wondrous voice,
    And the thrill of thy wild pervading tone!
But instead of towoo, thou hast learnt to coo:
Thy song is mute at the mellowing fruit,
And the dirge of the flowers is sung by the hours
    In silence and twilight alone.

O nightingale! 'tis this, 'tis this
    That makes thee mock the dove!
That thou hast past thy marriage bliss,
    To know a parent's love.
The waves of fern may fade and burn,
The grasses may fall, the flowers and all,
And the pine-smells o'er the oak dells
    Float on their drowsy and odorous wings,
But thou wilt do nothing but coo,
Brimming the nest with thy brooding breast,
'Midst that young throng of future song,
    Round whom the Future sings!

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

POEMS FROM 'MODERN LOVE'

(FIRST EDITION)

GRANDFATHER BRIDGEMAN

I

'Heigh, boys!' cried Grandfather Bridgeman, 'it's time before dinner to-day.'
He lifted the crumpled letter, and thumped a surprising 'Hurrah!'
Up jumped all the echoing young ones, but John, with the starch in his throat,
Said, 'Father, before we make noises, let's see the contents of the note.'
The old man glared at him harshly, and, twinkling made answer: 'Too bad!
John Bridgeman, I'm always the whisky, and you are the water, my lad!'

II

But soon it was known thro' the house, and the house ran over for joy,
That news, good news, great marvels, had come from the soldier boy;
Young Tom, the luckless scapegrace, offshoot of Methodist John;
His grandfather's evening tale, whom the old man hailed as his son.
And the old man's shout of pride was a shout of his victory, too;
For he called his affection a method: the neighbours' opinions he knew.

III

Meantime, from the morning table, removing the stout breakfast cheer,
The drink of the three generations, the milk, the tea, and the beer
(Alone in its generous reading of pints stood the Grandfather's jug),
The women for sight of the missive came pressing to coax and to hug.
He scattered them quick, with a buss and a smack; thereupon he began
Diversions with John's little Sarah: on Sunday, the naughty old man!

IV

Then messengers sped to the maltster, the auctioneer, miller, and all
The seven sons of the farmer who housed in the range of his call.
Likewise the married daughters, three plentiful ladies, prime cooks,
Who bowed to him while they condemned, in meek hope to stand high in his books.
'John's wife is a fool at a pudding,' they said, and the light carts up hill
Went merrily, flouting the Sabbath: for puddings well made mend a will.

V

The day was a van-bird of summer: the robin still piped, but the blue,
As a warm and dreary palace with voices of larks ringing thro',
Looked down as if wistfully eyeing the blossoms that fell from its lap:
A day to sweeten the juices: a day to quicken the sap.
All round the shadowy orchard sloped meadows in gold, and the dear
Shy violets breathed their hearts out: the maiden breath of the year!

VI

Full time there was before dinner to bring fifteen of his blood,
To sit at the old man's table: they found that the dinner was good.
But who was she by the lilacs and pouring laburnums concealed,
When under the blossoming apple the chair of the Grandfather wheeled?
She heard one little child crying, 'Dear brave Cousin Tom!' as it leapt;
Then murmured she: 'Let me spare them!' and passed round the walnuts, and wept.

VII

Yet not from sight had she slipped ere feminine eyes could detect
The figure of Mary Chariworth. 'It's just what we all might expect,'
Was uttered: and: 'Didn't I tell you?' Of Mary the rumour resounds,
That she is now her own mistress, and mistress of five thousand pounds.
'Twas she, they say, who cruelly sent young Tom to the war.
Miss Mary, we thank you now! If you knew what we're thanking you for!

VIII

But, 'Have her in: let her hear it,' called Grandfather Bridgeman, elate,
While Mary's black-gloved fingers hung trembling with flight on the gate.
Despite the women's remonstrance, two little ones, lighter than deer,
Were loosed, and Mary imprisoned, her whole face white as a tear,

Came forward with culprit footsteps. Her punishment was to commence:
The pity in her pale visage they read in a different sense.

IX

'You perhaps may remember a fellow, Miss Charlworth, a sort of black sheep,'
The old man turned his tongue to ironical utterance deep:
'He came of a Methodist dad, so it wasn't his fault if he kicked.
He earned a sad reputation, but Methodists are mortal strict.
His name was Tom, and, dash me! but Bridgeman I think you might add:
Whatever he was, bear in mind that he came of a Methodist dad.'

X

This prelude dismally lengthened, till Mary, starting, exclaimed,
'A letter, Sir, from your grandson?' 'Tom Bridgeman that rascal is named,
The old man answered, and further, the words that sent Tom to the ranks,
Repeated as words of a person to whom they all owed mighty thanks.
But Mary never blushed: with her eyes on the letter, she sate,
And twice interrupting him faltered, 'The date, may I ask, Sir, the date?

XI

'Why, that's what I never look at in a letter,' the farmer replied:
'Facts first! and now I'll be parson.' The Bridgeman women descried
A quiver on Mary's eyebrows. One turned, and while shifting her comb,
Said low to a sister: 'I'm certain she knows more than we about Tom.
She wants him now he's a hero!' The same, resuming her place,
Begged Mary to check them the moment she found it a tedious case.

XII

Then as a mastiff swallows the snarling noises of cats,
The voice of the farmer opened. '"Three cheers, and off with your hats!"
—That's Tom. "We've beaten them, Daddy, and tough work it was, to be sure!
A regular stand-up combat: eight hours smelling powder and gore.
I entered it Serjeant-Major,"—and now he commands a salute,
And carries the flag of old England! Heigh! see him lift foes on his foot

XIII

'—An officer! ay, Miss Chariworth, he is, or he is so to be;
You'll own war isn't such humbug: and Glory means something, you see.
"But don't say a word," he continues, "against the brave French any more."
—That stopt me: we'll now march together. I couldn't read further before.
That "brave French" I couldn't stomach. He can't see their cunning to get
Us Britons to fight their battles, while best half the winhings they net!'

XIV

The old man sneered, and read forward. It was of that desperate fight;—
The Muscovite stole thro' the mist-wreaths that wrapped the chill Inkermann height,
Where stood our silent outposts: old England was in them that day!
O sharp worked his ruddy wrinkles, as if to the breath of the fray
They moved! He sat bareheaded: his long hair over him slow,
Swung white as the silky bog-flowers in purple heath-hollows that grow.

XV

And louder at Tom's first person: acute and in thunder the 'I'
Invaded the ear with a whinny of triumph, that seem'd to defy
The hosts of the world. All heated, what wonder he little could brook
To catch the sight of Mary's demure puritanical look?
And still as he led the onslaught, his treacherous side-shots he sent
At her who was fighting a battle as fierce, and who sat there unbent.

XVI

'"We stood in line, and like hedgehogs the Russians rolled under us thick.
They frightened me there."—He's no coward; for when, Miss, they came at the quick,
The sight, he swears, was a breakfast.—"My stomach felt tight: in a glimpse
I saw you snoring at home with the dear cuddled-up little imps.
And then like the winter brickfields at midnight, hot fire lengthened out.
Our fellows were just leashed bloodhounds: no heart of the lot faced about.

XVII

'"And only that grumbler, Bob Harris, remarked that we stood one to ten:
'Ye fool,' says Mick Grady, 'just tell 'em they know to compliment men!'
And I sang out your old words: 'If the opposite side isn't God's,
Heigh! after you've counted a dozen, the pluckiest lads have the odds.'
Ping-ping flew the enemies' pepper: the Colonel roared, Forward, and we
Went at them. 'Twas first like a blanket: and then a long plunge in the sea.

XVIII

'"Well, now about me and the Frenchman: it happened I can't tell you how:
And, Grandfather, hear, if you love me, and put aside prejudice now":
He never says "Grandfather"—Tom don't—save it's a serious thing.
"Well, there were some pits for the rifles, just dug on our French-leaning wing:
And backwards, and forwards, and backwards we went, and at last I was vexed,
And swore I would never surrender a foot when the Russians charged next.

XIX

'"I know that life's worth keeping."—Ay, so it is, lad; so it is!—
"But my life belongs to a woman."—Does that mean Her Majesty, Miss?—
"These Russians came lumping and grinning: they're fierce at it, though they are blocks.
Our fellows were pretty well pumped, and looked sharp for the little French cocks.
Lord, didn't we pray for their crowing! when over us, on the hill-top,
Behold the first line of them skipping, like kangaroos seen on the hop.

XX

'"That sent me into a passion, to think of them spying our flight!"
Heigh, Tom! you've Bridgeman blood, boy! And, "'Face them!' I shouted: 'All right;
Sure, Serjeant, we'll take their shot dacent, like gentlemen,' Grady replied.
A ball in his mouth, and the noble old Irishman dropped by my side.
Then there was just an instant to save myself, when a short wheeze
Of bloody lungs under the smoke, and a red-coat crawled up on his knees.

XXI

'"'Twas Ensign Baynes of our parish."—Ah, ah, Miss Chariworth, the one
Our Tom fought for a young lady? Come, now we 've got into the fun!—
"I shouldered him: he primed his pistol, and I trailed my musket, prepared."
Why, that's a fine pick-a-back for ye, to make twenty Russians look scared!
"They came—never mind how many: we couldn't have run very well,
We fought back to back: 'face to face, our last time!' he said, smiling, and fell.

XXII

'"Then I strove wild for his body: the beggars saw glittering rings,
Which I vowed to send to his mother. I got some hard knocks and sharp stings,
But felt them no more than angel, or devil, except in the wind.
I know that I swore at a Russian for showing his teeth, and he grinned
The harder: quick, as from heaven, a man on a horse rode between,
And fired, and swung his bright sabre: I can't write you more of the scene.

XXIII

'"But half in his arms, and half at his stirrup, he bore me right forth,
And pitched me among my old comrades: before I could tell south from north,
He caught my hand up, and kissed it! Don't ever let any man speak
A word against Frenchmen, I near him! I can't find his name, tho' I seek.
But French, and a General, surely he was, and, God bless him! thro' him
I've learnt to love a whole nation."' The ancient man paused, winking dim.

XXIV

A curious look, half woeful, was seen on his face as he turned
His eyes upon each of his children, like one who but faintly discerned
His old self in an old mirror. Then gathering sense in his fist,
He sounded it hard on his knee-cap. 'Your hand, Tom, the French fellow kissed!
He kissed my boy's old pounder! I say he's a gentleman!' Straight
The letter he tossed to one daughter; bade her the remainder relate.

XXV

Tom properly stated his praises in facts, but the lady preferred
To deck the narration with brackets, and drop her additional word.
What nobler Christian natures these women could boast, who 'twas known,
Once spat at the name of their nephew, and now made his praises their own!
The letter at last was finished, the hearers breathed freely, and sign
Was given, 'Tom's health!'—Quoth the farmer: 'Eh, Miss? are you weak in the spine?'

XXVI

For Mary had sunk, and her body was shaking, as if in a fit.
Tom's letter she held, and her thumb-nail the month when the letter was writ
Fast-dinted, while she hung sobbing: 'O, see, Sir, the letter is old!
O, do not be too happy!'—'If I understand you, I'm bowled!'
Said Grandfather Bridgeman, 'and down go my wickets!—not happy! when here,
Here's Tom like to marry his General's daughter—or widow—I'll swear!

XXVII

'I wager he knows how to strut, too! It's all on the cards that the Queen
Will ask him to Buckingham Palace, to say what he's done and he's seen.
Victoria's fond of her soldiers: and she's got a nose for a fight.
If Tom tells a cleverish story—there is such a thing as a knight!
And don't he look roguish and handsome!—To see a girl snivelling there—
By George, Miss, it's clear that you're jealous!'—'I love him!' she answered his stare.

XXVIII

'Yes! now!' breathed the voice of a woman.—'Ah! now!' quiver'd low the reply.
'And "now"'s just a bit too late, so it's no use your piping your eye.'
The farmer added bluffly: 'Old Lawyer Chariworth was rich;
You followed his instructions in kicking Tom into the ditch.
If you're such a dutiful daughter, that doesn't prove Tom is a fool.
Forgive and forget's my motto! and here's my grog growing cool!'

XXIX

'But, Sir,' Mary faintly repeated: 'for four long weeks I have failed
To come and cast on you my burden; such grief for you always prevailed!
My heart has so bled for you!' The old man burst on her speech:
'You've chosen a likely time, Miss! a pretty occasion to preach!'
And was it not outrageous, that now, of all times, one should come
With incomprehensible pity! Far better had Mary been dumb.

XXX

But when again she stammered in this bewildering way,
The farmer no longer could bear it, and begged her to go, or to stay,
But not to be whimpering nonsense at such a time. Pricked by a goad,
'Twas you who sent him to glory:—you've come here to reap what you sowed.
Is that it?' he asked; and the silence the elders preserved, plainly said,
On Mary's heaving bosom this begging-petition was read.

XXXI

And that it was scarcely a bargain that she who had driven him wild,
Should share now the fruits of his valour, the women expressed, as they smiled.
The family pride of the Bridgemans was comforted; still, with contempt,
They looked on a monied damsel of modesty quite so exempt.
'O give me force to tell them!' cried Mary, and even as she spoke,
A shout and a hush of the children: a vision on all of them broke.

XXXII

Wheeled, pale, in a chair, and shattered, the wreck of their hero was seen;
The ghost of Tom drawn slow o'er the orchard's shadowy green.
Could this be the martial darling they joyed in a moment ago?
'He knows it?' to Mary Tom murmured, and closed his weak lids at her 'No.'
'Beloved!' she said, falling by him, 'I have been a coward: I thought
You lay in the foreign country, and some strange good might be wrought.

XXXIII

'Each day I have come to tell him, and failed, with my hand on the gate.
I bore the dreadful knowledge, and crushed my heart with its weight.

The letter brought by your comrade—he has but just read it aloud!
It only reached him this morning!' Her head on his shoulder she bowed.
Then Tom with pity's tenderest lordliness patted her arm,
And eyed the old white-head fondly, with something of doubt and alarm.

XXXIV

O, take to your fancy a sculptor whose fresh marble offspring appears
Before him, shiningly perfect, the laurel-crown'd issue of years:
Is heaven offended? for lightning behold from its bosom escape,
And those are mocking fragments that made the harmonious shape!
He cannot love the ruins, till feeling that ruins alone
Are left, he loves them threefold. So passed the old grandfather's moan.

XXXV

John's text for a sermon on Slaughter, he heard, and he did not protest.
All rigid as April snowdrifts, he stood, hard and feeble; his chest
Just showing the swell of the fire as it melted him. Smiting a rib,
'Heigh! what have we been about, Tom! Was this all a terrible fib?'
He cried, and the letter forth-trembled. Tom told what the cannon had done.
Few present but ached to see falling those aged tears on his heart's son!

XXXVI

Up lanes of the quiet village, and where the mill-waters rush red
Thro' browning summer meadows to catch the sun's crimsoning head,
You meet an old man and a maiden who has the soft ways of a wife
With one whom they wheel, alternate; whose delicate flush of new life
Is prized like the early primrose. Then shake his right hand, in the chair—
The old man fails never to tell you: 'You've got the French General's there!'

THE MEETING

The old coach-road through a common of furze,
With knolls of pine ran white;
Berries of autumn, with thistles, and burrs,
And spider-threads, droop'd in the light.

The light in a thin blue veil peered sick;
    The sheep grazed close and still;
The smoke of a farm by a yellow rick
    Curled lazily under a hill.

No fly shook the round of the silver net;
    No insect the swift bird chased;
Only two travellers moved and met
    Across that hazy waste.

One was a girl with a babe that throve,
    Her ruin and her bliss;
One was a youth with a lawless love,
    Who clasped it the more for this.

The girl for her babe hummed prayerful speech;
    The youth for his love did pray;
Each cast a wistful look on each,
    And either went their way.

THE BEGGAR'S SOLILOQUY

I

Now, this, to my notion, is pleasant cheer,
    To lie all alone on a ragged heath,
Where your nose isn't sniffing for bones or beer,
    But a peat-fire smells like a garden beneath.
The cottagers bustle about the door,
    And the girl at the window ties her strings.
She 's a dish for a man who 's a mind to be poor;
    Lord! women are such expensive things.

II

We don't marry beggars, says she: why, no:
    It seems that to make 'em is what you do;
And as I can cook, and scour, and sew,
    I needn't pay half my victuals for you.

A man for himself should be able to scratch,
    But tickling 's a luxury:—love, indeed!
Love burns as long as the lucifer match,
    Wedlock 's the candle! Now, that 's my creed.

III

The church-bells sound water-like over the wheat;
    And up the long path troop pair after pair.
The man 's well-brushed, and the woman looks neat:
    It 's man and woman everywhere!
Unless, like me, you lie here flat,
    With a donkey for friend, you must have a wife:
She pulls out your hair, but she brushes your hat.
    Appearances make the best half of life.

IV

You nice little madam! you know you 're nice.
    I remember hearing a parson say
You 're a plateful of vanity pepper'd with vice;
    Yon chap at the gate thinks t' other way.
On his waistcoat you read both his head and his heart:
    There 's a whole week's wages there figured in gold!
Yes! when you turn round you may well give a start:
    It 's fun to a fellow who 's getting old.

V

Now, that 's a good craft, weaving waistcoats and flowers,
    And selling of ribbons, and scenting of lard:
It gives you a house to get in from the showers,
    And food when your appetite jockeys you hard.
You live a respectable man; but I ask
    If it 's worth the trouble? You use your tools,
And spend your time, and what 's your task?
    Why, to make a slide for a couple of fools.

VI

You can't match the colour o' these heath mounds,
    Nor better that peat-fire's agreeable smell.
I 'm clothed-like with natural sights and sounds;
    To myself I 'm in tune: I hope you 're as well.

You jolly old cot! though you don't own coal:
    It's a generous pot that's boiled with peat.
Let the Lord Mayor o' London roast oxen whole:
    His smoke, at least, don't smell so sweet.

VII

I'm not a low Radical, hating the laws,
    Who'd the aristocracy rebuke.
I talk o' the Lord Mayor o' London because
    I once was on intimate terms with his cook.
I served him a turn, and got pensioned on scraps,
    And, Lord, Sir! didn't I envy his place,
Till Death knock'd him down with the softest of taps,
    And I knew what was meant by a tallowy face!

VIII

On the contrary, I'm Conservative quite;
    There's beggars in Scripture 'mongst Gentiles and Jews:
It's nonsense, trying to set things right,
    For if people will give, why, who'll refuse?
That stopping old custom wakes my spleen:
    The poor and the rich both in giving agree:
Your tight-fisted shopman's the Radical mean:
    There's nothing in common 'twixt him and me.

IX

He says I'm no use! but I won't reply.
    You're lucky not being of use to him!
On week-days he's playing at Spider and Fly,
    And on Sundays he sings about Cherubim!
Nailing shillings to counters is his chief work:
    He nods now and then at the name on his door:
But judge of us two, at a bow and a smirk,
    I think I'm his match: and I'm honest—that's more.

X

No use! well, I mayn't be. You ring a pig's snout,
    And then call the animal glutton! Now, he,
Mr. Shopman, he's nought but a pipe and a spout
    Who won't let the goods o' this world pass free.

This blazing blue weather all round the brown crop,
He can't enjoy! all but cash he hates.
He 's only a snail that crawls under his shop;
Though he has got the ear o' the magistrates.

XI

Now, giving and taking 's a proper exchange,
Like question and answer: you 're both content.
But buying and selling seems always strange;
You 're hostile, and that 's the thing that 's meant.
It 's man against man—you 're almost brutes;
There 's here no thanks, and there 's here no pride.
If Charity 's Christian, don't blame my pursuits,
I carry a touchstone by which you 're tried.

XII

—'Take it,' says she, 'it 's all I 've got':
I remember a girl in London streets:
She stood by a coffee-stall, nice and hot,
My belly was like a lamb that bleats.
Says I to myself, as her shilling I seized,
You haven't a character here, my dear!
But for making a rascal like me so pleased,
I 'll give you one, in a better sphere!

XIII

And that 's where it is—she made me feel
I was a rascal: but people who scorn,
And tell a poor patch-breech he isn't genteel,
Why, they make him kick up—and he treads on a corn.
It isn't liking, it 's curst ill-luck,
Drives half of us into the begging-trade:
If for taking to water you praise a duck,
For taking to beer why a man upbraid?

XIV

The sermon 's over: they 're out of the porch,
And it 's time for me to move a leg;
But in general people who come from church,
And have called themselves sinners, hate chaps to beg.

I 'll wager they 'll all of 'em dine to-day!
    I was easy half a minute ago.
If that isn't pig that 's baking away,
    May I perish!—we 're never contented—heigho!

CASSANDRA

I

Captive on a foreign shore,
Far from Ilion's hoary wave,
Agamemnon's bridal slave
Speaks Futurity no more:
Death is busy with her grave.

II

Thick as water, bursts remote
Round her ears the alien din,
While her little sullen chin
Fills the hollows of her throat:
Silent lie her slaughter'd kin.

III

Once to many a pealing shriek,
Lo, from Ilion's topmost tower,
Ilion's fierce prophetic flower
Cried the coming of the Greek!
Black in Hades sits the hour.

IV

Eyeing phantoms of the Past,
Folded like a prophet's scroll,
In the deep's long shoreward roll
Here she sees the anchor cast:
Backward moves her sunless soul.

V

Chieftains, brethren of her joy,
Shades, the white light in their eyes
Slanting to her lips, arise,
Crowding quick the plains of Troy:
Now they tell her not she lies.

VI

O the bliss upon the plains
Where the joining heroes clashed
Shield and spear, and, unabashed,
Challenged with hot chariot-reins
Gods!—they glimmer ocean-washed.

VII

Alien voices round the ships,
Thick as water, shouting Home.
Argives, pale as midnight foam,
Wax before her awful lips:
White as stars that front the gloom.

VIII

Like a torch-flame that by day
Up the daylight twists, and, pale,
Catches air in leaps that fail,
Crushed by the inveterate ray,
Through her shines the Ten-Years' Tale.

IX

Once to many a pealing shriek,
Lo, from Ilion's topmost tower,
Ilion's fierce prophetic flower,
Cried the coming of the Greek!
Black in Hades sits the hour.

X

Still upon her sunless soul,
Gleams the narrow hidden space
Forward, where her fiery race
Falters on its ashen goal:
Still the Future strikes her face.

XI

See, toward the conqueror's car
Step the purple Queen whose hate
Wraps red-armed her royal mate
With his Asian tempest-star:
Now Cassandra views her Fate.

XII

King of men! the blinded host
Shout:—she lifts her brooding chin:
Glad along the joyous din
Smiles the grand majestic ghost:
Clytemnestra leads him in.

XIII

Lo, their smoky limbs aloof,
Shadowing heaven and the seas,
Fates and Furies, tangling Threes,
Tear and mix above the roof:
Fates and fierce Eumenides.

XIV

Is the prophetess with rods
Beaten, that she writhes in air?
With the Gods who never spare,
Wrestling with the unsparing Gods,
Lone, her body struggles there.

XV

Like the snaky torch-flame white,
Levelled as aloft it twists,
She, her soaring arms, and wrists
Drooping, struggles with the light,
Helios, bright above all mists!

XVI

In his orb she sees the tower,
Dusk against its flaming rims,
Where of old her wretched limbs
Twisted with the stolen power:
Ilium all the lustre dims!

XVII

O the bliss upon the plains,
Where the joining heroes clashed
Shield and spear, and, unabashed,
Challenged with hot chariot-reins
Gods!—they glimmer ocean-washed.

XVIII

Thrice the Sun-god's name she calls;
Shrieks the deed that shames the sky;
Like a fountain leaping high,
Falling as a fountain falls:
Lo, the blazing wheels go by!

XIX

Captive on a foreign shore,
Far from Ilion's hoary wave,
Agamemnon's bridal slave
Speaks Futurity no more:
Death is busy with her grave.

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

THE YOUNG USURPER

On my darling's bosom
Has dropped a living rosy-bud,
Fair as brilliant Hesper
Against the brimming flood.
She handles him,
She dandles him,
She fondles him and eyes him:
And if upon a tear he wakes,
With many a kiss she dries him:
She covets every move he makes,
And never enough can prize him.
Ah, the young Usurper!
I yield my golden throne:
Such angel bands attend his hands
To claim it for his own.

MARGARET'S BRIDAL-EVE

I

The old grey mother she thrummed on her knee:
There is a rose that's ready:
And which of the handsome young men shall it be?
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

My daughter, come hither, come hither to me:
There is a rose that's ready;
Come, point me your finger on him that you see:
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

O mother, my mother, it never can be:
There is a rose that's ready;
For I shall bring shame on the man marries me:
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

Now let your tongue be deep as the sea:
There is a rose that's ready;
And the man 'll jump for you, right briskly will he:
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

Tall Margaret wept bitterly;
There is a rose that's ready;
And as her parent bade did she;
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

O the handsome young man dropped down on his knee;
There is a rose that's ready;
Pale Margaret gave him her hand, woe 's me!
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

II

O mother, my mother, this thing I must say,
There is a rose in the garden;
Ere he lies on the breast where that other lay:
And the bird sings over the roses.

Now, folly, my daughter, for men are men:
There is a rose in the garden;
You marry them blindfold, I tell you again:
And the bird sings over the roses.

O mother, but when he kisses me!
There is a rose in the garden;
My child, 'tis which shall sweetest be!
And the bird sings over the roses.

O mother, but when I awake in the morn!
There is a rose in the garden;
My child, you are his, and the ring is worn;
And the bird sings over the roses.

Tall Margaret sighed and loosened a tress;
There is a rose in the garden;
Poor comfort she had of her comeliness;
And the bird sings over the roses.

My mother will sink if this thing be said:
There is a rose in the garden;
That my first betrothed came thrice to my bed;
And the bird sings over the roses.

He died on my shoulder the third cold night;
There is a rose in the garden;
I dragged his body all through the moonlight;
And the bird sings over the roses.

But when I came by my father's door;
There is a rose in the garden;
I fell in a lump on the stiff dead floor;
And the bird sings over the roses.

O neither to heaven, nor yet to hell;
There is a rose in the garden;
Could I follow the lover I loved so well!
And the bird sings over the roses.

III

The bridesmaids slept in their chambers apart;
There is a rose that's ready;
Tall Margaret walked with her thumping heart;
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

The frill of her nightgown below the left breast,
There is a rose that's ready;
Had fall'n like a cloud of the moonlighted West;
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

But where the West-cloud breaks to a star;
There is a rose that's ready;
Pale Margaret's breast showed a winding scar;
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

O few are the brides with such a sign!
There is a rose that's ready;
Though I went mad the fault was mine;
There's a rose that s ready for clipping.

I must speak to him under this roof to-night;
There is a rose that's ready;
I shall burn to death if I speak in the light;
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

O my breast! I must strike you a bloodier wound;
There is a rose that's ready;
Than when I scored you red and swoomed,
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

I will stab my honour under his eye;
There is a rose that's ready;
Though I bleed to the death, I shall let out the lie;
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

O happy my bridesmaids! white sleep is with you!
There is a rose that's ready;
Had he chosen among you he might sleep too!
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

O happy my bridesmaids! your breasts are clean;
There is a rose that's ready;
You carry no mark of what has been!
There's a rose that's ready for clipping.

IV

An hour before the chilly beam,
Red rose and white in the garden;
The bridegroom started out of a dream,
And the bird sings over the roses.

He went to the door, and there espied
Red rose and white in the garden;
The figure of his silent bride,
And the bird sings over the roses.

He went to the door, and let her in;
Red rose and white in the garden;
Whiter looked she than a child of sin;
And the bird sings over the roses.

She looked so white, she looked so sweet;
Red rose and white in the garden;
She looked so pure he fell at her feet;
And the bird sings over the roses.

He fell at her feet with love and awe;
Red rose and white in the garden;
A stainless body of light he saw;
And the bird sings over the roses.

O Margaret, say you are not of the dead!
Red rose and white in the garden;
My bride! by the angels at night are you led?
And the bird sings over the roses.

I am not led by the angels about;
Red rose and white in the garden;
But I have a devil within to let out;
And the bird sings over the roses.

O Margaret! my bride and saint!
Red rose and white in the garden;
There is on you no earthly taint:
And the bird sings over the roses.

I am no saint, and no bride can I be,
Red rose and white in the garden;
Until I have opened my bosom to thee;
And the bird sings over the roses.

To catch at her heart she laid one hand;
Red rose and white in the garden;
She told the tale where she did stand;
And the bird sings over the roses.

She stood before him pale and tall;
Red rose and white in the garden;
Her eyes between his, she told him all;
And the bird sings over the roses.

She saw how her body grew freckled and foul;
Red rose and white in the garden;
She heard from the woods the hooting owl;
And the bird sings over the roses.

With never a quiver her mouth did speak;
Red rose and white in the garden;
O when she had done she stood so meek!
And the bird sings over the roses.

The bridegroom stamped and called her vile;
Red rose and white in the garden;
He did but waken a little smile;
And the bird sings over the roses.

The bridegroom raged and called her foul;
Red rose and white in the garden;
She heard from the woods the hooting owl;
And the bird sings over the roses.

He muttered a name full bitter and sore;
Red rose and white in the garden;
She fell in a lump on the still dead floor;
And the bird sings over the roses.

O great was the wonder, and loud the wail,
Red rose and white in the garden;
When through the household flew the tale;
And the bird sings over the roses.

The old grey mother she dressed the bier;
Red rose and white in the garden;
With a shivering chin and never a tear;
And the bird sings over the roses.

O had you but done as I bade you, my child!
Red rose and white in the garden;
You would not have died and been reviled;
And the bird sings over the roses.

The bridegroom he hung at midnight by the bier;
Red rose and white in the garden;
He eyed the white girl thro' a dazzling tear;
And the bird sings over the roses.

O had you been false as the women who stray;
Red rose and white in the garden;
You would not be now with the Angels of Day!
And the bird sings over the roses.

THE HEAD OF BRAN THE BLEST

I

When the Head of Bran
Was firm on British shoulders,
God made a man!
Cried all beholders.

Steel could not resist
The weight his arm would rattle;
He, with naked fist,
Has brain'd a knight in battle.

He marched on the foe,
And never counted numbers;
Foreign widows know
The hosts he sent to slumbers.

As a street you scan,
That 's towered by the steeple,
So the Head of Bran
Rose o'er his people.

II

'Death 's my neighbour,'
Quoth Bran the Blest;
'Christian labour
Brings Christian rest.

From the trunk sever
The Head of Bran,
That which never
Has bent to man!

'That which never
To men has bowed,
Shall live ever
To shame the shroud:
Shall live ever
To face the foe;
Sever it, sever,
And with one blow.

'Be it written,
That all I wrought
Was for Britain,
In deed and thought:
Be it written,
That while I die,
Glory to Britain!
Is my last cry.

'Glory to Britain!
Death echoes me round.
Glory to Britain!
The world shall resound.
Glory to Britain!
In ruin and fall,
Glory to Britain!
Is heard over all.'

III

Burn, Sun, down the sea!
Bran lies low with thee.

Burst, Morn, from the main!
Bran so shall rise again.

Blow, Wind, from the field!
Bran's Head is the Briton's shield.

Beam, Star, in the West!
Bright burns the Head of Bran the Blest.

IV

Crimson-footed, like the stork,
From great ruts of slaughter,
Warriors of the Golden Torque,
Cross the lifting water.
Princes seven, enchaining hands,
Bear the live head homeward.
Lo! it speaks, and still commands:
Gazing out far foamward.

Fiery words of lightning sense,
Down the hollows thunder;
Forest hostels know not whence
Comes the speech, and wonder.
City-Castles, on the steep,
Where the faithful Seven
House at midnight, hear, in sleep,
Laughter under heaven.

Lilies, swimming on the mere,
In the castle shadow,
Under draw their heads, and Fear
Walks the misty meadow.
Tremble not! it is not Death
Pledging dark espousal:
'Tis the Head of endless breath,
Challenging carousal!

Brim the horn! a health is drunk,
Now, that shall keep going:
Life is but the pebble sunk;
Deeds, the circle growing!

Fill, and pledge the Head of Bran!
While his lead they follow,
Long shall heads in Britain plan
Speech Death cannot swallow!

BY MORNING TWILIGHT

Night, like a dying mother,
Eyes her young offspring, Day.
The birds are dreamily piping.
And O, my love, my darling!
The night is life ebb'd away:
Away beyond our reach!
A sea that has cast us pale on the beach;
Weeds with the weeds and the pebbles
That hear the lone tamarisk rooted in sand,
Sway
With the song of the sea to the land.

AUTUMN EVEN-SONG

The long cloud edged with streaming grey,
Soars from the West;
The red leaf mounts with it away,
Showing the nest
A blot among the branches bare:
There is a cry of outcasts in the air.

Swift little breezes, darting chill,
Pant down the lake;
A crow flies from the yellow hill,
And in its wake
A baffled line of labouring rooks:
Steel-surfaced to the light the river looks.

Pale on the panes of the old hall
Gleams the lone space
Between the sunset and the squall;
And on its face
Mournfully glimmers to the last:
Great oaks grow mighty minstrels in the blast.

Pale the rain-rutted roadways shine
In the green light
Behind the cedar and the pine:
Come, thundering night!
Blacken broad earth with hoards of storm:
For me yon valley-cottage beckons warm.

UNKNOWN FAIR FACES

Though I am faithful to my loves lived through,
And place them among Memory's great stars,
Where burns a face like Hesper: one like Mars:
Of visages I get a moment's view,
Sweet eyes that in the heaven of me, too,
Ascend, tho' virgin to my life they passed.
Lo, these within my destiny seem glassed
At times so bright, I wish that Hope were new.
A gracious freckled lady, tall and grave,
Went in a shawl voluminous and white,
Last sunset by; and going sow'd a glance.
Earth is too poor to hold a second chance;
I will not ask for more than Fortune gave:
My heart she goes from—never from my sight

PHANTASY

I

Within a Temple of the Toes,
Where twirled the passionate Will,
I saw full many a market rose,
And sighed for my village lily.

II

With cynical Adrian then I took flight
    To that old dead city whose carol
Bursts out like a reveller's loud in the night,
    As he sits astride his barrel.

III

We two were bound the Alps to scale,
    Up the rock-reflecting river;
Old times blew thro' me like a gale,
    And kept my thoughts in a quiver.

IV

Hawking ruin, wood-slope, and vine,
    Reeled silver-laced under my vision,
And into me passed, with the green-eyed wine
    Knocking hard at my head for admission.

V

I held the village lily cheap,
    And the dream around her idle:
Lo, quietly as I lay to sleep,
    The bells led me off to a bridal.

VI

My bride wore the hood of a Benguine,
    And mine was the foot to falter;
Three cowled monks, rat-eyed, were seen;
    The Cross was of bones o'er the altar.

VII

The Cross was of bones; the priest that read,
    A spectacled necromancer:
But at the fourth word, the bride I led,
    Changed to an Opera dancer.

VIII

A young ballet-beauty, who perked in her place,
A darling of pink and spangles;
One fair foot level with her face,
And the hearts of men at her ankles.

IX

She whirled, she twirled, the mock-priest grinned,
And quickly his mask unriddled;
'Twas Adrian! loud his old laughter dinned;
Then he seized a fiddle, and fiddled.

X

He fiddled, he glowed with the bottomless fire,
Like Sathanas in feature:
All through me he fiddled a wolfish desire
To dance with that bright creature.

XI

And gathering courage I said to my soul,
Throttle the thing that hinders!
When the three cowled monks, from black as coal,
Waxed hot as furnace-cinders.

XII

They caught her up, twirling: they leapt between-whiles:
The fiddler flickered with laughter:
Profanely they flew down the awful aisles,
Where I went sliding after.

XIII

Down the awful aisles, by the fretted walls,
Beneath the Gothic arches:—
King Skull in the black confessionals
Sat rub-a-dub-dubbing his marches.

XIV

Then the silent cold stone warriors frowned,
The pictured saints strode forward:
A whirlwind swept them from holy ground;
A tempest puffed them nor'ward.

XV

They shot through the great cathedral door;
Like mallards they traversed ocean:
And gazing below, on its boiling floor,
I marked a horrid commotion.

XVI

Down a forest's long alleys they spun like tops:
It seemed that for ages and ages,
Thro' the Book of Life bereft of stops,
They waltzed continuous pages.

XVII

And ages after, scarce awake,
And my blood with the fever fretting,
I stood alone by a forest-lake,
Whose shadows the moon were netting.

XVIII

Lilies, golden and white, by the curls
Of their broad flat leaves hung swaying.
A wreath of languid twining girls
Streamed upward, long locks disarraying.

XIX

Their cheeks had the satin frost-glow of the moon;
Their eyes the fire of Sirius.
They circled, and droned a monotonous tune,
Abandoned to love delirious.

XX

Like lengths of convolvulus torn from the hedge,
And trailing the highway over,
The dreamy-eyed mistresses circled the sedge,
And called for a lover, a lover!

XXI

I sank, I rose through seas of eyes,
In odorous swathes delicious:
They fanned me with impetuous sighs,
They bit me with kisses vicious.

XXII

My ears were spelled, my neck was coiled,
And I with their fury was glowing,
When the marbly waters bubbled and boiled
At a watery noise of crowing.

XXIII

They dragged me low and low to the lake:
Their kisses more stormily showered;
On the emerald brink, in the white moon's wake,
An earthly damsel cowered.

XXIV

Fresh heart-sobs shook her knitted hands
Beneath a tiny suckling,
As one by one of the doleful bands
Dived like a fairy duckling.

XXV

And now my turn had come—O me!
What wisdom was mine that second!
I dropped on the adorer's knee;
To that sweet figure I beckoned.

XXVI

Save me! save me! for now I know
The powers that Nature gave me,
And the value of honest love I know:—
My village lily! save me!

XXVII

Come 'twixt me and the sisterhood,
While the passion-born phantoms are fleeing!
Oh, he that is true to flesh and blood,
Is true to his own being!

XXVIII

And he that is false to flesh and blood,
Is false to the star within him:
And the mad and hungry sisterhood
All under the tides shall win him!

XXIX

My village lily! save me! save!
For strength is with the holy:—
Already I shuddered to feel the wave,
As I kept sinking slowly:—

XXX

I felt the cold wave and the under-tug
Of the Brides, when—starting and shrinking—
Lo, Adrian tilts the water-jug!
And Bruges with morn is blinking.

XXXI

Merrily sparkles sunny prime
On gabled peak and arbour:
Merrily rattles belfry-chime
The song of Sevilla's Barber.

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

SHEMSELNIHAR

O my lover! the night like a broad smooth wave
    Bears us onward, and morn, a black rock, shines wet.
How I shuddered—I knew not that I was a slave,
    Till I looked on thy face:—then I writhed in the net.
Then I felt like a thing caught by fire, that her star
Glowed dark on the bosom of Shemselnihar.

And he came, whose I am: O my lover! he came:
    And his slave, still so envied of women, was I:
And I turned as a hissing leaf spits from the flame,
    Yes, I shrivelled to dust from him, haggard and dry.
O forgive her:—she was but as dead lilies are:
The life of her heart fled from Shemselnihar.

Yet with thee like a full throbbing rose how I bloom!
    Like a rose by the fountain whose showering we hear,
As we lie, O my lover! in this rich gloom,
    Smelling faint the cool breath of the lemon-groves near.
As we lie gazing out on that glowing great star—
Ah! dark on the bosom of Shemselnihar.

Yet with thee am I not as an arm of the vine,
    Firm to bind thee, to cherish thee, feed thee sweet?
Swear an oath on my lip to let none disentwine
    The life that here fawns to give warmth to thy feet.
I on thine, thus! no more shall that jewelled Head jar
The music thou breathest on Shemselnihar.

Far away, far away, where the wandering scents
    Of all flowers are sweetest, white mountains among,
There my kindred abide in their green and blue tents:
    Bear me to them, my lover! they lost me so young.
Let us slip down the stream and leap steed till afar
None question thy claim upon Shemselnihar.

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

O that long note the bulbul gave out—meaning love!
    O my lover, hark to him and think it my voice!
The blue night like a great bell-flower from above
    Drooping low and gold-eyed: O, but hear him rejoice!
Can it be? 'twas a flash! that accurst scimitàr
In thought even cuts thee from Shemseinihar.

Yes, I would that, less generous, he would oppress,
    He would chain me, upbraid me, burn deep brands for hate,
Than with this mask of freedom and gorgeousness,
    Bespangle my slavery, mock my strange fate.
Would, would, would, O my lover, he knew—dared debar
Thy coming, and earn curse of Shemseinihar!

A ROAR THROUGH THE TALL TWIN ELM-TREES

A roar thro' the tall twin elm-trees
    The mustering storm betrayed:
The South-wind seized the willow
    That over the water swayed.

Then fell the steady deluge
    In which I strove to doze,
Hearing all night at my window
    The knock of the winter rose.

The rainy rose of winter!
    An outcast of must pine.
And from thy bosom outcast
    Am I, dear lady mine.

WHEN I WOULD IMAGE

When I would image her features,
    Comes up a shrouded head:
I touch the outlines, shrinking;
    She seems of the wandering dead.

But when love asks for nothing,
    And lies on his bed of snow,
The face slips under my eyelids,
    All in its living glow.

Like a dark cathedral city,
    Whose spires, and domes, and towers
Quiver in violet lightnings,
    My soul basks on for hours.

I CHAFE AT DARKNESS

I chafe at darkness in the night,
        But when 'tis light,
    Hope shuts her eyes; the clouds are pale;
The fields stretch cold into a distance hard:
    I wish again to draw the veil
        Thousand-starred.

Am I of them whose blooms are shed,
        Whose fruits are spent,
    Who from dead eyes see Life half dead;—
Because desire is feeble discontent?
    Ah, no! desire and hope should die,
        Thus were I.

But in me something clipped of wing,
        Within its ring
    Frets; for I have lost what made
The dawn-breeze magic, and the twilight beam
    A hand with tidings o'er the glade
        Waving seem.

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

BY THE ROSANNA

To F. M.

STANZER THAL, TYROL.

The old grey Alp has caught the cloud,
And the torrent river sings aloud;
The glacier-green Rosanna sings
An organ song of its upper springs.
Foaming under the tiers of pine,
I see it dash down the dark ravine,
And it tumbles the rocks in boisterous play,
With an earnest will to find its way.
Sharp it throws out an emerald shoulder,
    And, thundering ever of the mountain,
Slaps in sport some giant boulder,
    And tops it in a silver fountain.
A chain of foam from end to end,
And a solitude so deep, my friend,
You may forget that man abides
Beyond the great mute mountain-sides.
Yet to me, in this high-walled solitude
Of river and rock and forest rude,
The roaring voice through the long white chain,
Is the voice of the world of bubble and brain.

ODE TO THE SPIRIT OF EARTH IN AUTUMN

Fair Mother Earth lay on her back last night,
To gaze her fill on Autumn's sunset skies,
When at a waving of the fallen light,
Sprang realms of rosy fruitage o'er her eyes.
A lustrous heavenly orchard hung the West,
Wherein the blood of Eden bloomed again:
Red were the myriad cherub-mouths that pressed,
Among the clusters, rich with song, full fain,
But dumb, because that overmastering spell
Of rapture held them dumb: then, here and there,

A golden harp lost strings; a crimson shell
Burnt grey; and sheaves of lustre fell to air.
The illimitable eagerness of hue
Bronzed, and the beamy winged bloom that flew
'Mid those bunched fruits and thronging figures failed.
A green-edged lake of saffron touched the blue,
With isles of fireless purple lying through:
And Fancy on that lake to seek lost treasures sailed.

Not long the silence followed:
The voice that issues from the breast,
O glorious South-west,
Along the gloom-horizon holloa'd;
Warning the valleys with a mellow roar
Through flapping wings; then sharp the woodland bore
A shudder and a noise of hands:
A thousand horns from some far vale
In ambush sounding on the gale.
Forth from the cloven sky came bands
Of revel-gathering spirits; trooping down,
Some rode the tree-tops; some on torn cloud-strips,
Burst screaming thro' the lighted town:
And scudding seaward, some fell on big ships:
Or mounting the sea-horses blew
Bright foam-flakes on the black review
Of heaving hulls and burying beaks.

Still on the farthest line, with outpuffed cheeks,
'Twixt dark and utter dark, the great wind drew
From heaven that disenchanted harmony
To join earth's laughter in the midnight blind:
Booming a distant chorus to the shrieks
Preluding him: then he,
His mantle streaming thunderingly behind,
Across the yellow realm of stiffened Day,
Shot thro' the woodland alleys signals three;
And with the pressure of a sea,
Plunged broad upon the vale that under lay.

Night on the rolling foliage fell:
But I, who love old hymning night,
And know the Dryad voices well,
Discerned them as their leaves took flight,
Like souls to wander after death:
Great armies in imperial dyes,
And mad to tread the air and rise,
The savage freedom of the skies
To taste before they rot. And here,
Like frail white-bodied girls in fear,
The birches swung from shrieks to sighs;
The aspens, laughers at a breath,
In showering spray-falls mixed their cries,
Or raked a savage ocean-strand
With one incessant drowning screech.
Here stood a solitary beech,
That gave its gold with open hand,
And all its branches, toning chill,
Did seem to shut their teeth right fast,
To shriek more mercilessly shrill,
And match the fierceness of the blast.

But heard I a low swell that noised
Of far-off ocean, I was 'ware
Of pines upon their wide roots poised,
Whom never madness in the air
Can draw to more than loftier stress
Of mournfulness, not mournfulness
For melancholy, but Joy's excess,
That singing, on the lap of sorrow faints:
And Peace, as in the hearts of saints
Who chant unto the Lord their God;
Deep Peace below upon the muffled sod,
The stillness of the sea's unswaying floor.
Could I be sole there not to see
The life within the life awake;
The spirit bursting from the tree,
And rising from the troubled lake?
Pour, let the wines of Heaven pour!

The Golden Harp is struck once more,
And all its music is for me!
Pour, let the wines of Heaven pour!
And, ho, for a night of Pagan glee!

There is a curtain o'er us.
For once, good souls, we 'll not pretend
To be aught better than her who bore us,
And is our only visible friend.
Hark to her laughter! who laughs like this,
Can she be dead, or rooted in pain?
She has been slain by the narrow brain,
But for us who love her she lives again.
Can she die? O, take her kiss!

The crimson-footed nymph is panting up the glade,
With the wine-jar at her arm-pit, and the drunken ivy-braid
Round her forehead, breasts, and thighs: starts a Satyr, and they speed:
Hear the crushing of the leaves: hear the cracking of the bough!
And the whistling of the bramble, the piping of the weed!

But the bull-voiced oak is battling now:
The storm has seized him half-asleep,
And round him the wild woodland throngs
To hear the fury of his songs,
The uproar of an outraged deep.
He wakes to find a wrestling giant
Trunk to trunk and limb to limb,
And on his rooted force reliant,
He laughs and grasps the broadened giant,
And twist and roll the Anakim;
And multitudes acclaiming to the cloud,
Cry which is breaking, which is bowed.

Away, for the cymbals clash aloft
In the circles of pine, on the moss-floor soft.
The nymphs of the woodland are gathering there.

They huddle the leaves, and trample, and toss;
They swing in the branches, they roll in the moss,
    They blow the seed on the air.
Back to back they stand and blow
The winged seed on the cradling air,
A fountain of leaves over bosom and back.
The pipe of the Faun comes on their track,
And the weltering alleys overflow
With musical shrieks and wind-wedded hair.
The riotous companies melt to a pair.
    Bless them, mother of kindness!

    A star has nodded through
    The depths of the flying blue.
    Time only to plant the light
    Of a memory in the blindness.
    But time to show me the sight
    Of my life thro' the curtain of night;
    Shining a moment, and mixed
    With the onward-hurrying stream,
    Whose pressure is darkness to me;
    Behind the curtain, fixed,
    Beams with endless beam
    That star on the changing sea.

Great Mother Nature! teach me, like thee,
To kiss the season and shun regrets.
And am I more than the mother who bore,
Mock me not with thy harmony!
    Teach me to blot regrets,
    Great Mother! me inspire
    With faith that forward sets
    But feeds the living fire.
    Faith that never frets
    For vagueness in the form.
    In life, O keep me warm!
    For, what is human grief?
    And what do men desire?
Teach me to feel myself the tree,

And not the withered leaf.
Fixed am I and await the dark to-be!

And O, green bounteous Earth!
Bacchante Mother! stern to those
Who live not in thy heart of mirth;
Death shall I shrink from, loving thee?
Into the breast that gives the rose,
Shall I with shuddering fall?

Earth, the mother of all,
Moves on her stedfast way,
Gathering, flinging, sowing.
Mortals, we live in her day,
She in her children is growing.

She can lead us, only she,
Unto God's footstool, whither she reaches:
Loved, enjoyed, her gifts must be,
Reverenced the truths she teaches,
Ere a man may hope that he
Ever can attain the glee
Of things without a destiny!

She knows not loss:
She feels but her need,
Who the winged seed
With the leaf doth toss.

And may not men to this attain?
That the joy of motion, the rapture of being,
Shall throw strong light when our season is fleeing,
Nor quicken aged blood in vain,
At the gates of the vault, on the verge of the plain?
Life thoroughly lived is a fact in the brain,
While eyes are left for seeing.

Behold, in yon stripped Autumn, shivering grey,
Earth knows no desolation.
She smells regeneration
In the moist breath of decay.

Prophetic of the coming joy and strife,
Like the wild western war-chief sinking
Calm to the end he eyes unblinking,
Her voice is jubilant in ebbing life.

He for his happy hunting-fields,
Forgets the droning chant, and yields
His numbered breaths to exultation
In the proud anticipation:
Shouting the glories of his nation,
Shouting the grandeur of his race,
Shouting his own great deeds of daring:
And when at last death grasps his face,
And stiffened on the ground in peace
He lies with all his painted terrors glaring;
Hushed are the tribe to hear a threading cry:
Not from the dead man;
Not from the standers-by:
The spirit of the red man
Is welcomed by his fathers up on high.

POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH

THE DOE: A FRAGMENT

(From 'Wandering Willie')

And—'Yonder look! yoho! yoho!
Nancy is off!' the farmer cried,
Advancing by the river side,
Red-kerchieft and brown-coated;—'So,
My girl, who else could leap like that?
So neatly! like a lady! 'Zounds!
Look at her how she leads the hounds!'
And waving his dusty beaver hat,
He cheered across the chase-filled water,
And clapt his arm about his daughter,
And gave to Joan a courteous hug,
And kiss that, like a stubborn plug
From generous vats in vastness rounded,
The inner wealth and spirit sounded:
Eagerly pointing South, where, lo,
The daintiest, fleetest-footed doe
Led o'er the fields and thro' the furze
Beyond: her lively delicate ears
Prickt up erect, and in her track
A dappled lengthy-striding pack.

Scarce had they cast eyes upon her,
When every heart was wagered on her,
And half in dread, and half delight,
They watched her lovely bounding flight;
As now across the flashing green,
And now beneath the stately trees,
And now far distant in the dene,
She headed on with graceful ease:
Hanging aloft with doubled knees,
At times athwart some hedge or gate;
And slackening pace by slow degrees,
As for the foremost foe to wait.

Renewing her outstripping rate
Whene'er the hot pursuers neared,
By garden wall and paled estate,
Where clambering gazers whooped and cheered.
Here winding under elm and oak,
And slanting up the sunny hill:
Splashing the water here like smoke
Among the mill-holms round the mill.

And—'Let her go; she shows her game,
My Nancy girl, my pet and treasure!'
The farmer sighed: his eyes with pleasure
Brimming: ''Tis my daughter's name,
My second daughter lying yonder.'
And Willie's eye in search did wander,
And caught at once, with moist regard,
The white gleams of a grey churchyard.
'Three weeks before my girl had gone,
And while upon her pillows propped,
She lay at eve; the weakling fawn—
For still it seems a fawn just dropt
A se'nnight—to my Nancy's bed
I brought to make my girl a gift:
The mothers of them both were dead:
And both to bless it was my drift,
By giving each a friend; not thinking
How rapidly my girl was sinking.
And I remember how, to pat
Its neck, she stretched her hand so weak,
And its cold nose against her cheek
Pressed fondly: and I fetched the mat
To make it up a couch just by her,
Where in the lone dark hours to lie:
For neither dear old nurse nor I
Would any single wish deny her.
And there unto the last it lay;
And in the pastures cared to play
Little or nothing: there its meals
And milk I brought: and even now

The creature such affection feels
For that old room that, when and how,
'Tis strange to mark, it slinks and steals
To get there, and all day conceals.
And once when nurse who, since that time,
Keeps house for me, was very sick,
Waking upon the midnight chime,
And listening to the stair-clock's click,
I heard a rustling, half uncertain,
Close against the dark bed-curtain:
And while I thrust my leg to kick,
And feel the phantom with my feet,
A loving tongue began to lick
My left hand lying on the sheet;
And warm sweet breath upon me blew,
And that 'twas Nancy then I knew.
So, for her love, I had good cause
To have the creature "Nancy" christened.'

He paused, and in the moment's pause,
His eyes and Willie's strangely glistened.
Nearer came Joan, and Bessy hung
With face averted, near enough
To hear, and sob unheard; the young
And careless ones had scampered off
Meantime, and sought the loftiest place
To beacon the approaching chase.

'Daily upon the meads to browse,
Goes Nancy with those dairy cows
You see behind the clematis:
And such a favourite she is,
That when fatigued, and helter skelter,
Among them from her foes to shelter,
She dashes when the chase is over,
They'll close her in and give her cover,
And bend their horns against the hounds,
And low, and keep them out of bounds!
From the house dogs she dreads no harm,

And is good friends with all the farm,
Man, and bird, and beast, howbeit
Their natures seem so opposite.
And she is known for many a mile,
And noted for her splendid style,
For her clear leap and quick slight hoof;
Welcome she is in many a roof.
And if I say, I love her, man!
I say but little: her fine eyes full
Of memories of my girl, at Yule
And May-time, make her dearer than
Dumb brute to men has been, I think.
So dear I do not find her dumb.
I know her ways, her slightest wink,
So well; and to my hand she 'll come,
Sideleng, for food or a caress,
Just like a loving human thing.
Nor can I help, I do confess,
Some touch of human sorrowing
To think there may be such a doubt
That from the next world she 'll be shut out,
And parted from me! And well I mind
How, when my girl's last moments came,
Her soft eyes very soft and kind,
She joined her hands and prayed the same,
That she "might meet her father, mother,
Sister Bess, and each dear brother,
And with them, if it might be, one
Who was her last companion."
Meaning the fawn—the doe you mark—
For my bay mare was then a foal,
And time has passed since then:—but hark!'

For like the shrieking of a soul
Shut in a tomb, a darkened cry
Of inward-wailing agony
Surprised them, and all eyes on each
Fixed in the mute-appealing speech
Of self-reproachful apprehension:

Knowing not what to think or do:
But Joan, recovering first, broke through
The instantaneous suspension,
And knelt upon the ground, and guessed
The bitterness at a glance, and pressed
Into the comfort of her breast,
The deep-throed quaking shape that drooped
In misery's wilful aggravation,
Before the farmer as he stooped,
Touched with accusing consternation:
Soothing her as she sobbed aloud:—
'Not me! not me! Oh, no, no, no!
Not me! God will not take me in!
Nothing can wipe away my sin!
I shall not see her: you will go;
You and all that she loves so:
Not me! not me! Oh, no, no, no!'
Colourless, her long black hair,
Like seaweed in a tempest tossed
Tangling astray, to Joan's care
She yielded like a creature lost:
Yielded, drooping toward the ground,
As doth a shape one half-hour drowned,
And heaved from sea with mast and spar,
All dark of its immortal star.
And on that tender heart, inured
To flatter basest grief, and fight
Despair upon the brink of night,
She suffered herself to sink, assured
Of refuge; and her ear inclined
To comfort; and her thoughts resigned
To counsel; her wild hair let brush
From off her weeping brows; and shook
With many little sobs that took
Deeper-drawn breaths, till into sighs
Long sighs they sank; and to the 'hush!'
Of Joan's gentle chide, she sought
Childlike to check them as she ought,
Looking up at her infantwise.

And Willie, gazing on them both,
Shivered with bliss through blood and brain,
To see the darling of his troth
Like a maternal angel strain
The sinful and the sinless child
At once on either breast, and there
In peace and promise reconciled
Unite them: nor could Nature's care
With subtler sweet beneficence
Have fed the springs of penitence,
Still keeping true, though harshly tried,
The vital prop of human pride.

SCATTERED POEMS

SCATTERED POEMS

INVITATION TO THE COUNTRY

Now 'tis Spring on wood and wold,
Early Spring that shivers with cold,
But gladdens, and gathers, day by day,
A lovelier hue, a warmer ray,
A sweeter song, a dearer ditty;
Ouzel and throstle, new-mated and gay,
Singing their bridals on every spray—
Oh, hear them, deep in the songless City!
Cast off the yoke of toil and smoke,
As Spring is casting winter's grey,
As serpents cast their skins away:
And come, for the Country awaits thee with pity
And longs to bathe thee in her delight,
And take a new joy in thy kindling sight;
And I no less, by day and night,
Long for thy coming, and watch for, and wait thee,
And wonder what duties can thus belate thee.

Dry-fruited firs are dropping their cones,
And vista'd avenues of pines
Take richer green, give fresher tones,
As morn after morn the glad sun shines.

Primrose tufts peep over the brooks,
Fair faces amid moist decay!
The rivulets run with the dead leaves at play,
The leafless elms are alive with the rooks.

Over the meadows the cowslips are springing,
The marshes are thick with king-cup gold,
Clear is the cry of the lambs in the fold,
The skylark is singing, and singing, and singing.

Soon comes the cuckoo when April is fair,
And her blue eye the brighter the more it may weep:
The frog and the butterfly wake from their sleep,
Each to its element, water and air.

Mist hangs still on every hill,
And curls up the valleys at eve; but noon
Is fullest of Spring; and at midnight the moon
Gives her westering throne to Orion's bright zone,
As he slopes o'er the darkened world's repose;
And a lustre in eastern Sirius glows.

Come, in the season of opening buds;
Come, and molest not the otter that whistles
Unlit by the moon, 'mid the wet winter bristles
Of willow, half-drowned in the fattening floods.
Let him catch his cold fish without fear of a gun,
And the stars shall shield him, and thou wilt shun!
And every little bird under the sun
Shall know that the bounty of Spring doth dwell
In the winds that blow, in the waters that run,
And in the breast of man as well.

SCATTERED POEMS

THE SWEET O' THE YEAR

Now the frog, all lean and weak,
    Yawning from his famished sleep,
Water in the ditch doth seek,
    Fast as he can stretch and leap:
        Marshy king-cups burning near,
        Tell him 'tis the sweet o' the year.

Now the ant works up his mound
    In the mouldered piny soil,
And above the busy ground
    Takes the joy of earnest toil:
        Dropping pine-cones, dry and sere,
        Warn him 'tis the sweet o' the year.

Now the chrysalis on the wall
    Cracks, and out the creature springs,
Raptures in his body small,
    Wonders on his dusty wings:
        Bells and cups, all shining clear,
        Show him 'tis the sweet o' the year.

Now the brown bee, wild and wise,
    Hums abroad, and roves and roams,
Storing in his wealthy thighs
    Treasure for the golden combs:
        Dewy buds and blossoms dear
        Whisper 'tis the sweet o' the year.

Now the merry maids so fair
    Weave the wreaths and choose the queen,
Blooming in the open air,
    Like fresh flowers upon the green;
        Spring, in every thought sincere,
        Thrills them with the sweet o' the year.

Now the lads, all quick and gay,
    Whistle to the browsing herds,
Or in the twilight pastures grey
    Learn the use of whispered words:
        First a blush, and then a tear,
        And then a smile, i' the sweet o' the year.

Now the May-fly and the fish
    Play again from noon to night;
Every breeze begets a wish,
    Every motion means delight:
        Heaven high over heath and mere,
        Crowns with blue the sweet o' the year.

Now all Nature is alive,
    Bird and beetle, man and mole;
Bee-like goes the human hive,
    Lark-like sings the soaring soul:
        Hearty faith and honest cheer
        Welcome in the sweet o' the year.

THE SONG OF COURTESY

I

When Sir Gawain was led to his bridal-bed,
By Arthur's knights in scorn God-sped:—
How, think you, he felt?
        O the bride within
Was yellow and dry as a snake's old skin;
        Loathly as sin!
        Scarcely faceable,
        Quite unembraceable;
With a hog's bristle on a hag's chin!—
Gentle Gawain felt as should we,
Little of Love's soft fire knew he:
But he was the Knight of Courtesy.

II

When that evil lady he lay beside
Bade him turn to greet his bride,
What, think you, he did?
O, to spare her pain,
And let not his loathing her loathliness vain
Mirror too plain,
Sadly, sighingly,
Almost dyingly,
Turned he and kissed her once and again.
Like Sir Gawain, gentles, should we?
Silent, all! But for pattern agree
There 's none like the Knight of Courtesy.

III

Sir Gawain sprang up amid laces and curls:
Kisses are not wasted pearls:—
What clung in his arms?
O, a maiden flower,
Burning with blushes the sweet bride-bower,
Beauty her dower!
Breathing perfumingly,
Shall I live bloomingly,
Said she, by day, or the bridal hour?
Thereat he clasped her, and whispered he,
Thine, rare bride, the choice shall be.
Said she, Twice blest is Courtesy!

IV

Of gentle Sir Gawain they had no sport,
When it was morning in Arthur's court;
What, think you, they cried?
Now, life and eyes!
This bride is the very Saint's dream of a prize,
Fresh from the skies!
See ye not, Courtesy
Is the true Alchemy,

Turning to gold all it touches and tries?
Like the true knight, so may we
Make the basest that there be
Beautiful by Courtesy!

THE THREE MAIDENS

There were three maidens met on the highway;
The sun was down, the night was late:
And two sang loud with the birds of May,
O the nightingale is merry with its mate.

Said they to the youngest, Why walk you there so still?
The land is dark, the night is late:
O, but the heart in my side is ill,
And the nightingale will languish for its mate.

Said they to the youngest, Of lovers there is store;
The moon mounts up, the night is late:
O, I shall look on man no more,
And the nightingale is dumb without its mate.

Said they to the youngest, Uncross your arms and sing:
The moon mounts high, the night is late:
O my dear lover can hear no thing,
And the nightingale sings only to its mate.

They slew him in revenge, and his true-love was his lure:
The moon is pale, the night is late:
His grave is shallow on the moor;
O the nightingale is dying for its mate.

His blood is on his breast, and the moss-roots at his hair:
The moon is chill, the night is late:
But I will lie beside him there:
O the nightingale is dying for its mate.

SCATTERED POEMS

THE CROWN OF LOVE

O might I load my arms with thee,
    Like that young lover of Romance
Who loved and gained so gloriously
    The fair Princess of France!

Because he dared to love so high,
    He, bearing her dear weight, shall speed
To where the mountain touched on sky:
    So the proud king decreed.

Unhalting he must bear her on,
    Nor pause a space to gather breath,
And on the height she will be won;—
    And she was won in death!

Red the far summit flames with morn,
    While in the plain a glistening Court
Surrounds the king who practised scorn
    Through such a mask of sport.

She leans into his arms; she lets
    Her lovely shape be clasped: he fares.
God speed him whole! The knights make bets:
    The ladies lift soft prayers.

O have you seen the deer at chase?
    O have you seen the wounded kite?
So boundingly he runs the race,
    So wavering grows his flight.

—My lover! linger here, and slake
    Thy thirst, or me thou wilt not win.
—See'st thou the tumbled heavens? they break!
    They beckon us up and in.

—Ah, hero-love! unloose thy hold:
O drop me like a curséd thing.
—See'st thou the crowded swards of gold?
They wave to us Rose and Ring.

—O death-white mouth! O cast me down!
Thou diest? Then with thee I die.
—See'st thou the angels with their Crown?
We twain have reached the sky.

LINES TO A FRIEND VISITING AMERICA

I

Now farewell to you! you are
One of my dearest, whom I trust:
Now follow you the Western star,
And cast the old world off as dust.

II

From many friends adieu! adieu!
The quick heart of the word therein.
Much that we hope for hangs with you:
We lose you, but we lose to win.

III

The beggar-king, November, frets:
His tatters rich with Indian dyes
Goes hugging: we our season's debts
Pay calmly, of the Spring forewise.

IV

We send our worthiest; can no less,
If we would now be read aright,—
To that great people who may bless
Or curse mankind: they have the might.

V

The proudest seasons find their graves,
And we, who would not be wooed, must court.
We have let the blunderers and the waves
Divide us, and the devil had sport.

VI

The blunderers and the waves no more
Shall sever kindred sending forth
Their worthiest from shore to shore
For welcome, bent to prove their worth.

VII

Go you and such as you afloat,
Our lost kinsfellowship to revive.
The battle of the antidote
Is tough, though silent: may you thrive!

VIII

I, when in this North wind I see
The straining red woods blown awry,
Feel shuddering like the winter tree,
All vein and artery on cold sky.

IX

The leaf that clothed me is torn away;
My friend is as a flying seed.
Ay, true; to bring replenished day
Light ebbs, but I am bare, and bleed.

X

What husky habitations seem
These comfortable sayings! they fell,
In some rich year become a dream:—
So cries my heart, the infidel! . . .

XI

Oh! for the strenuous mind in quest,
Arabian visions could not vie
With those broad wonders of the West,
And would I bid you stay? Not I!

XII

The strange experimental land
Where men continually dare take
Niagara leaps;—unshattered stand
'Twixt fall and fall;—for conscience' sake,

XIII

Drive onward like a flood's increase;—
Fresh rapids and abysms engage;—
(We live—we die) scorn fireside peace,
And, as a garment, put on rage,

XIV

Rather than bear God's reprimand,
By rearing on a full fat soil
Concrete of sin and sloth;—this land,
You will observe it coil in coil.

XV

The land has been discover'd long,
The people we have yet to know;
Themselves they know not, save that strong
For good and evil still they grow.

XVI

Nor know they us. Yea, well enough
In that inveterate machine
Through which we speak the printed stuff
Daily, with voice most hugeous, mien

XVII

Tremendous:—as a lion's show
The grand menagerie paintings hide:
Hear the drum beat, the trombones blow!
The poor old Lion lies inside! . . .

XVIII

It is not England that they hear,
But mighty Mammon's pipers, trained
To trumpet out his moods, and stir
His sluggish soul: *her* voice is chained:

XIX

Almost her spirit seems moribund!
O teach them, 'tis not she displays
The panic of a purse rotund,
Eternal dread of evil days,—

XX

That haunting spectre of success
Which shows a heart sunk low in the girths:
Not England answers nobleness,—
'Live for thyself: thou art not earth's.'

XXI

Not she, when struggling manhood tries
For freedom, air, a hopefuller fate,
Points out the planet, Compromise,
And shakes a mild reproving pate:

XXII

Says never: 'I am well at ease,
My sneers upon the weak I shed:
The strong have my cajoleries:
And those beneath my feet I tread.'

XXIII

Nay, but 'tis said for her, great Lord!
The misery 's there! The shameless one
Adjures mankind to sheathe the sword,
Herself not yielding what it won:—

XXIV

Her sermon at cock-crow doth preach,
On sweet Prosperity—or greed.
'Lo! as the beasts feed, each for each,
God's blessings let us take, and feed!'

XXV

Ungrateful creatures crave a part—
She tells them firmly she is full;
Lest sheared sheep hurt her tender heart
With bleating, stops her ears with wool:—

XXVI

Seized sometimes by prodigious qualms
(Nightmares of bankruptcy and death),—
Showers down in lumps a load of alms,
Then pants as one who has lost a breath;

XXVII

Believes high heaven, whence favours flow,
Too kind to ask a sacrifice
For what it specially doth bestow:—
Gives *she*, 'tis generous, cheese to mice.

XXVIII

She saw the young Dominion strip
For battle with a grievous wrong,
And curled a noble Norman lip,
And looked with half an eye sidelong;

XXIX

And in stout Saxon wrote her sneers,
Denounced the waste of blood and coin,
Implored the combatants, with tears,
Never to think they could rejoin.

XXX

Oh! was it England that, alas!
Turned sharp the victor to cajole?
Behold her features in the glass:
A monstrous semblance mocks her soul!

XXXI

A false majority, by stealth,
Have got her fast, and sway the rod:
A headless tyrant built of wealth,
The hypocrite, the belly-God.

XXXII

To him the daily hymns they raise:
His tastes are sought: his will is done:
He sniffs the putrid steam of praise,
Place for true England here is none!

XXXIII

But can a distant race discern
The difference 'twixt her and him?
My friend, that will you bid them learn.
He shames and binds her, head and limb.

XXXIV

Old wood has blossoms of this sort.
Though sound at core, she is old wood.
If freemen hate her, one retort
She has; but one!—'You are my blood.'

XXXV

A poet, half a prophet, rose
In recent days, and called for power.
I love him; but his mountain prose—
His Alp and valley and wild flower—

XXXVI

Proclaimed our weakness, not its source.
What medicine for disease had he?
Whom summoned for a show of force?
Our titular aristocracy!

XXXVII

Why, these are great at City feasts;
From City riches mainly rise:
'Tis well to hear them, when the beasts
That die for us they eulogize!

XXXVIII

But these, of all the liveried crew
Obeisant in Mammon's walk,
Most deferent ply the facial screw,
The spinal bend, submissive talk.

XXXIX

Small fear that they will run to books
(At least the better form of seed)!
I, too, have hoped from their good looks,
And fables of their Northman breed;—

XL

Have hoped that they the land would head
In acts magnanimous; but, lo,
When fainting heroes beg for bread
They frown: where they are driven they go.

XLI

Good health, my friend! and may your lot
Be cheerful o'er the Western rounds.
This butter-woman's market-trot
Of verse is passing market-bounds.

XLII

Adieu! the sun sets; he is gone.
On banks of fog faint lines extend:
Adieu! bring back a braver dawn
To England, and to me my friend.

November 15th, 1867.

ON THE DANGER OF WAR

Avert, High Wisdom, never vainly wooed,
This threat of War, that shows a land brain-sick
When nations gain the pitch where rhetoric
Seems reason they are ripe for cannon's food.
Dark looms the issue though the cause be good,
But with the doubt 'tis our old devil's trick.
O now the down-slope of the lunatic
Illumine lest we redden of that brood.
For not since man in his first view of thee
Ascended to the heavens giving sign
Within him of deep sky and sounded sea,
Did he unforfeiting thy laws transgress;
In peril of his blood his ears incline
To drums whose loudness is their emptiness.

SCATTERED POEMS

TO CARDINAL MANNING

I, wakeful for the skylark voice in men,
Or straining for the angel of the light,
Rebuked am I by hungry ear and sight,
When I behold one lamp that through our fen
Goes hourly where most noisome; hear again
A tongue that loathsomeness will not affright
From speaking to the soul of us forthright
What things our craven senses keep from ken.
This is the doing of the Christ; the way
He went on earth; the service above guile
To prop a tyrant creed: it sings, it shines;
Cries to the Mammonites: Allay, allay
Such misery as by these present signs
Brings vengeance down; nor them who rouse revile.

TO CHILDREN: FOR TYRANTS

I

Strike not thy dog with a stick!
    I did it yesterday:
Not to undo though I gained
The Paradise: heavy it rained
    On Kobold's flanks, and he lay.

II

Little Bruno, our long-ear pup,
    From his hunt had come back to my heel.
I heard a sharp worrying sound,
And Bruno foamed on the ground,
    With Koby as making a meal.

III

I did what I could not undo
    Were the gates of the Paradise shut
Behind me: I deemed it was just.
I left Koby crouched in the dust,
    Some yards from the woodman's hut.

IV

He bewhimpered his welting, and I
    Scarce thought it enough for him: so,
By degrees, through the upper box-grove,
Within me an old story hove,
    Of a man and a dog: you shall know.

V

The dog was of novel breed,
    The Shannon retriever, untried:
His master, an old Irish lord,
In an oaken armchair snored
    At midnight, whisky beside.

VI

Perched up a desolate tower,
    Where the black storm-wind was a whip
To set it nigh spinning, these two
Were alone, like the last of a crew,
    Outworn in a wave-beaten ship.

VII

The dog lifted muzzle, and sniffed;
    He quitted his couch on the rug,
Nose to floor, nose aloft; whined, barked;
And finding the signals unmarked,
    Caught a hand in a death-grapple tug.

VIII

He pulled till his master jumped
For fury of wrath, and laid on
With the length of a tough knotted staff,
Fit to drive the life flying like chaff,
And leave a sheer carcase anon.

IX

That done, he sat, panted, and cursed
The vile cross of this brute: nevermore
Would he house it to rear such a cur!
The dog dragged his legs, pained to stir,
Eyed his master, dropped, barked at the door.

X

Then his master raised head too, and sniffed:
It struck him the dog had a sense
That honoured both dam and sire.
You have guessed how the tower was afire.
The Shannon retriever dates thence.

XI

I mused: saw the pup ease his heart
Of his instinct for chasing, and sink
Overwrought by excitement so new:
A scene that for Koby to view,
Was the seizure of nerves in a link.

XII

And part sympathetic, and part
Imitatively, raged my poor brute;
And I, not thinking of ill,
Doing eviller: nerves are still
Our savage too quick at the root.

XIII

They spring us: I proved it, albeit
    I played executioner then
For discipline, justice, the like.
Yon stick I had handy to strike,
    Should have warned of the tyrant in men.

XIV

You read in your History books,
    How the Prince in his youth had a mind
For governing gently his land.
Ah, the use of that weapon at hand,
    When the temper is other than kind!

XV

At home all was well; Koby's ribs
    Not so sore as my thoughts: if, beguiled,
He forgives me, his criminal air
Throws a shade of Llewellyn's despair
    For the hound slain for saving his child.

A STAVE OF ROVING TIM

(Addressed to certain friendly Tramps)

I

The wind is East, the wind is West,
    Blows in and out of haven;
The wind that blows is the wind that 's best,
    And croak, my jolly raven!
If here awhile we jigged and laughed,
    The like we will do yonder;
For he 's the man who masters a craft,
    And light as a lord can wander.

So, foot the measure, Roving Tim,
And croak, my jolly raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

II

You live in rows of snug abodes,
With gold, maybe, for counting;
And mine 's the beck of the rainy roads
Against the sun amounting.
I take the day as it behaves,
Nor shiver when 'tis airy;
But comes a breeze, all you are on waves,
Sick chickens o' Mother Carey!
So, now for next, cries Roving Tim,
And croak, my jolly raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

III

Sweet lass, you screw a lovely leer,
To make a man consider.
If you were up with the auctioneer,
I 'd be a handsome bidder.
But wedlock clips the rover's wing;
She tricks him fly to spider;
And when we get to fights in the Ring,
It 's trumps when you play outsider.
So, wrench and split, cries Roving Tim,
And croak, my jolly raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

IV

Along my winding way I know
A shady dell that 's winking;
The very corner for Self and Co
To do a world of thinking.

And shall I this? and shall I that?
Till Nature answers, ne'ther!
Strike match and light your pipe in your hat,
Rejoicing in sound shoe-leather!
So lead along, cries Roving Tim,
And croak, my jolly raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

V

A cunning hand 'll hand you bread,
With freedom for your capers.
I 'm not so sure of a cunning head;
It steers to pits or vapours.
But as for Life, we 'll bear in sight
The lesson Nature teaches;
Regard it in a sailoring light,
And treat it like thirsty leeches.
So, fly your jib, cries Roving Tim,
And top your boom, old raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

VI

She 'll take, to please her dame and dad,
The shopman nicely shaven.
She 'll learn to think o' the marching lad
When perchers show they 're craven.
You say the shopman piles a heap,
While I perhaps am fasting;
And bless your wits, it haunts him in sleep,
His tin-kettle chance of lasting!
So hail the road, cries Roving Tim,
And hail the rain, old raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

VII

He 's half a wife, you pecker bill;
A book and likewise preacher.
With any soul, in a game of skill,
He 'll prove your over-reacher.
The reason is, his brains are bent
On doing things right single.
You 'd wish for them when pitching your tent
At night in a whirly dingle!
So, off we go, cries Roving Tim,
And on we go, old raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

VIII

Lord, no, man's lot is not for bliss;
To call it woe is blindness:
It 's here a kick, and it 's there a kiss,
And here and there a kindness.
He starts a hare and calls her joy;
He runs her down to sorrow:
The dogs within him bother the boy,
But 'tis a new day to-morrow.
So, I at helm, cries Roving Tim,
And you at bow, old raven!
The wind according to its whim
Is in and out of haven.

ON HEARING THE NEWS FROM VENICE

(The Death of Robert Browning)

Now dumb is he who waked the world to speak,
And voiceless hangs the world beside his bier.
Our words are sobs, our cry of praise a tear:
We are the smitten mortal, we the weak.

We see a spirit on Earth's loftiest peak
Shine, and wing hence the way he makes more clear:
See a great Tree of Life that never sere
Dropped leaf for aught that age or storms might wreak.
Such ending is not Death: such living shows
What wide illumination brightness sheds
From one big heart, to conquer man's old foes:
The coward, and the tyrant, and the force
Of all those weedy monsters raising heads
When Song is murk from springs of turbid source.

December 13, 1889.

THE RIDDLE FOR MEN

I

This Riddle rede or die,
Says History since our Flood,
To warn her sons of power:—
It can be truth, it can be lie;
Be parasite to twist awry;
The drouthy vampire for your blood;
The fountain of the silver flower;
A brand, a lure, a web, a crest;
Supple of wax or tempered steel;
The spur to honour, snake in nest:
'Tis as you will with it to deal;
To wear upon the breast,
Or trample under heel.

II

And read you not aright,
Says Nature, still in red
Shall History's tale be writ!
For solely thus you lead to light
The trailing chapters she must write,
And pass my fiery test of dead

Or living through the furnace-pit:
Disinked from who the softer hold
In grip of brute, and brute remain:
Of whom the woeful tale is told,
How for one short Sultanic reign,
Their bodies lapse to mould,
Their souls behowl the plain.

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